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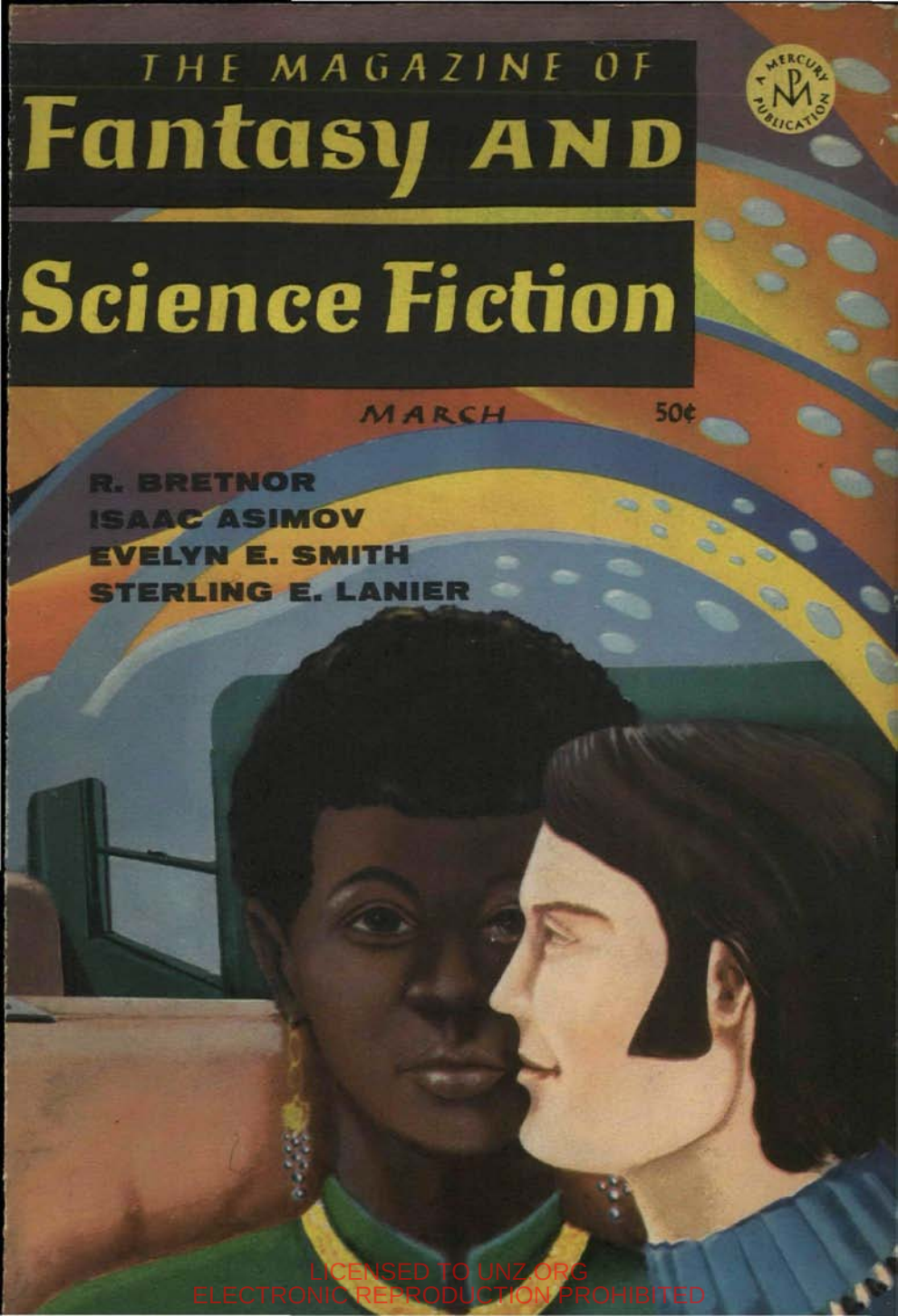

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARCH *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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Many of Evelyn E. Smith's past contributions to F&SF were notable for a sure-handed light touch, the kind of barbed, but basically "white" humor that seems in short supply these days. We have not heard from Miss Smith in some years, and what a pleasure it is to have her back with this hilarious tale of two youngsters in darkest adolescence and their confrontations with the middle-class, the middle-aged and other aliens.

CALLIOPE AND GHERKIN AND THE YANKEE DOODLE THING

by Evelyn E. Smith

ALTHOUGH, UNLIKE THE YOUNG David Copperfield, I lay no claim to a personal experience of events which took place in a time before I was even conceived of, the happenings which ultimately led to my appearance upon this plane and planet have been recounted to me so often and with such detail by all having any connection with an event not even my mother could describe as blessed that I feel far better qualified to tell it like it was, so to speak, than either the prime participants or their well-meaning, thus doubly-culpable, manipulators. My story —no, not yet my story, the story of those two star-uncrossed non-lovers who sponsored my birth might be given an arbitrary beginning upon the afternoon that Gherkin, having quitted his picket line and concluded his college day, walked into the Bobbery Shop, a preoccupied expression upon his amorphous adolescent countenance. This abstraction went unheeded by Calliope, for she was big with news and anxious to deliver herself; therefore, even though her first question, "Where the hell did you disappear to Friday night?" might appear on the surface to express a kindly concern, it was mere rhetoric; for, as he opened his mouth to tell of the strange and wondrous things that

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had befallen him upon the Friday night in question, she proceeded to burble of her own insignificant adventurings.

"I got tired of waiting around for you to show, so I went up to Mattie's pad all by myself, and, guess what, we got busted—or almost, anyway! We'd just lit up when the fuzz appeared and hauled us all down to headquarters . . . very non-violently," she added, regretful, for she knew the mere fact of near or even total arrest without dynamic confrontation was insufficient to qualify her as a bona fide activist. "Then they found out the grass they'd collected at Mattie's was nothing but catnip, and it seems there's no law against smoking that *yet,* so they gave us the boot. Without carfare or anything!" She frowned. "But do you think that's what we've been getting high on all along at Mattie's, just plain, old-fashioned *Nepeta Cataria?"*

"Well, cats get high on the stuff," Gherkin said, still very preoccupied, almost intense, if anybody'd had the decency to notice, "so why not people? Speaking of cats—"

"But the prices Mattie was charging! For stuff you could get in the five and dime. And she seemed so humanistic, you know what I mean, I'd never have figured her for a fink. Worst part is now I won't have any place for next Friday; 'tisn't easy to find a nice respectable pothouse these days."

At this point she recognized Gherkin as not merely audience cum wailing wall but as an individual with sufficient self-identity to suffer along with her . . . and serve him right for standing her up! She continued on a note of melancholy glee, "Which means you won't have anywhere for next Friday either, unless you've found yourself another place where I don't happen to be welcome—in which case all you've got to do is say the word. I'm not one to make a scene where I'm not wanted."

"If you'll just shut up and give me a chance. . . . I *did* find a new place. That's why I wasn't at Mattie's. I was on a trip." He was smug because this had been the real thing; over the weekend he had found the key that unlocked the universe. "I went up and all the way and it was like—" he paused for the *mot juste* "—it was like wow. And they said I could come again next week and bring a friend so—" His gesture of invitation was almost courtly.

Calliope was impressed, gratified, frightened. "You mean . . . like acid? Golly gee, but that can be dangerous. I mean like I know the establishment is always trying to put down everything really meaningful, but I happen to have it on good authority from a bio major that this bit is straight. The stuff can mess up your chromo-

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somes, you know what I mean, and when you have kids they freak out or something—"

"It wasn't acid! Think I don't know better than that? It was something else, something new to —well—something new. Guaranteed absolutely harmless, the cat said, no undesirable aftereffects, no addiction, no nothing."

How could he be so credulous; how *dared* he be so credulous, and flaunt his overprivileged innocence in her face? "Are you that simple, man? You think they're going to come right out and tell you like each trip you take you blow a little piece of mind en route? Let me tell you that is not the kind of pitch to attract customers. By the way, just how much loot did they stick you for?"

He hesitated, finally admitted, "Not a cent. They said they were doing this as—well—a public service. . . ."

"Oh, boy-ee!" Calliope's face was disgusted, her voice was disgusted, even the way she stabbed her spoon into the glob of pistachio ice-cream was disgusted. "You swallowed that? Nobody's ever told you about the birds and the beastlies? This has all the stink of a commercial operation. Sure, you get it free the first time, very cheap the second, maybe even the third. Then, when you're hooked and on your knees screaming, they start to put on the screws. That's the system, baby."

"But these cats aren't part of the system. They come from outside the system." He stopped, then said, sounding very lame as he got stood up against the communications wall, "They're different."

"You're different. I'm different. But there can't be any more different than that." Black, white, male, female, weren't those differences enough for anyone?

"What does it matter!" he said impatiently. "They were beautiful; the whole thing was beautiful."

But the thing hadn't begun beautiful. In fact it had begun pretty ugly, and he'd thought, insofar as he was still capable of thinking after it had started, that it was going to be one of those bad trips you hear about but never expect to happen to stable, chemically balanced you. She asked exactly how he had taken the stuff, but he couldn't remember; he just knew he hadn't swallowed or smoked it, nor had he been given an injection. "Maybe it was like some kind of gas. I remember smelling something funny halfway over, but they told me it was fresh air which I didn't recognize because I'd never had a chance to smell any before."

Whatever it was that had been administered to him, it had made him sick, really physically sick, first like just a bad case of seasickness, then worse and worse, radiating from the pit of his stom-

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ach all the way out to his extremities until his fingers and his head were all qualmy and quivering; then slowly, inexorably, he'd begun to turn inside out, little by agonizing little. It was like he was standing off somewhere at a distance seeing—no, not exactly seeing, *observing* his own eversion. His guts crawled all over him snakelike and squeezed, tighter and tighter, compressing what was left of him into a small dark ball with the brain huddled inside shrieking with terror until it shrank into nothingness and he blanked into infinity.

When consciousness came back, he found he had been . . . reassembled, not merely in another place but another *where*. "Like another world, kind of."

"You mean like Oz, Never-Never Land, Back of the Looking Glass, that sort of thing?"

He hesitated, finally said, "Yeh," as if that was easier than trying to give it a name himself. He did try to break it down into details; he'd been able to see colors that weren't part of the spectrum he knew . . . heard sounds that were—well—he hadn't the words to describe them but the ugly part was over, finished, dissolved; from then on it was all beauty.

Since he seemed to be going into free fall—the stuff obviously was not without aftereffects no matter what he'd been *told*—she asked who or what had been in this simplistic dream universe along with him, not because she was interested (she'd heard better hallucinations) but because she wanted to bring him back to whatever was currently passing for reality. After a pause, he finally said they were people—"sort of." And, among them one special person. In short, a girl. But—there he went again—different from all the other girls he had ever known, really different. In the first place, she'd been green.

"You really are up tight about this color thing, aren't you, baby? Black and white aren't enough for you the way they are for most folks; you've got to have green too!"

"Everybody there—everybody who *belonged* there, lived there—was green," he said, very defensive. "I don't mean their skins were actually green—"

"Well, that's a relief; we have enough chromatic problems—"

"I mean they had green fur, so I wouldn't know what color their skins were."

"Your out-of-this-world chick was covered with hair like a gorilla? A green gorilla? Well, I must say that certainly *is* different!"

Gherkin was annoyed. "She wasn't like a gorilla at all. Her fur was soft and delicate like fuzz—" Calliope made face and he smiled grudgingly and amended that to "—like down or velvet."

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"I s'pose she had a tail too."

"Well, sure, that was what made it so beautiful. I mean, you have no idea how groovy a tail can be when you—" he stopped.

"You mean to say you made out with this green-tailed person?"

He didn't speak, but from the obscenely rhapsodic expression on his face she could tell he had and that it had been a good scene. "Hell, Callie," he burst out, "she was only in my mind so what does it matter? I've had dreams like that before."

But the way he talked, the way he looked, he'd never before, dreaming or waking, dug anybody like that green chick. Not that he'd had much experience with the sex-experience; and Calliope, to her embarrassment, none at all. But, even though virgin by circumstance, she knew she could be groovier than any green girl, groovier than any girl in the whole universe as soon as she got clued in on what it was all about. Sometimes she thought the reason Gherkin'd never tried for a physical interaction with her was because he was leery of breaking in a beginner, and sometimes she wondered if maybe he had some kind of sexual hang-up (she had theories on that subject), but most times she felt no matter how liberated and humanistic and with it he was, the skin thing still bugged him. If so, you could say maybe his hallucination about making it with a furry green girl meant he was trying to overcome his own unconscious rejection of her. But that was such a Psychology I way of looking at things. No, the truth of the matter probably was he thought of her as a soul brother.

From the way he smiled to himself she could tell that to him the green girl was more than merely a fantasy projection with whom he had spent an imaginary weekend. There could be a rational explanation. "Maybe while you were thinking green fluff you were actually balling one of the chicks who was making the trip along with you."

"That's the funny thing; there wasn't anybody else making the trip. Nobody I saw, anyway, 'cept the cats who set it up, and I have an idea they didn't actually participate. More the cold, scientific type."

She was glad to be given a value-reason for verbalizing her shock. "But that's wrong. Taking a trip alone—that's sick, downright perverted. Tripping's got to be a together thing or it's just another cop-out, you know what I mean. And the greenies, the ones in your mind, don't count."

As a matter of fact, he told her, after he'd arrived at . . . wherever it was; it'd had a name but he'd lost it somewhere on the way back . . . he had seen other people around, in the distance, people of his own kind, unfurred,

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and, yes, yes, yes, black as well as white. He really hadn't paid much attention. Who would look at human beings with their slick, ugly pink (or brown or black) plastic skins when there were the softly furred green folk to be looked at, girls like . . . dammit, he'd lost her name too . . . to be looked at, loved. . . ? Of course, he snapped before Calliope had a chance, he knew the human beings didn't count any more than the green people when it came to the reality thing; they must have been in the mind too. But it felt like a group experience so it was a good scene.

No, she told him, it had been bad, no matter how good it looked, because loneliness was the root of all evil, leading to alienation, loss of identity, all kinds of hang-ups. The tribal instinct was the only sound one man had, the only one that might, possibly, pull him through. He told her to quit lecturing; she sounded like a mother and he already had enough mother.

"I tried to call you over the weekend," Callie said. "There were two concerts and a smash-in in Central Park I thought we might go to together, but nobody answered the phone over at your place."

And what would have happened if somebody other than Gherkin himself had answered, she wondered, never having had occasion to call him at home before, since mostly he had been wherever she was. She had never met his parents, nor had he met hers, because nobody introduced anybody to parents nowadays. You didn't let them in on anything that was real and decent; you kept them in their place while there was still a place for them. You didn't even tell them your real, personal, group-given names. Still, would both of them have conformed so rigorously to the tribal pattern if they and their parents had been other than they were?

Calliope's mother was a schoolteacher; her father worked for the Post Office. Both belonged to all the right causes, her mother being more involved because of her job —a teacher was expected to be militant if she knew what was good for her—but in their hearts neither was what their daughter would have considered truly committed. They had worked too hard to reach middle-class status to give it up lightly at the cry of "Uncle Tom," and, although they were hip enough not to come right out and say so, some of their best friends were white people, with whom they usually felt a little uncomfortable.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Fillmore had been born in Harlem before the press started calling it a "ghetto." "When I was a boy, people used the word *ghetto* to mean a place where Jews lived," Mr.

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Fillmore used to say, bewildered. "They even talked about a 'Gilded Ghetto' where rich Jews lived. How did it get to mean a black slum all of a sudden?"

"Mark my words, it's all that Sammy Davis, Jr.'s fault," said Mr. Fillmore's old Aunt Ada who, although an emigré frim the South of half a century's standing, refused to be reconstructed. "What I say is I ain't got nothin' against Jews, but when you're born with one strike against you, why go out and ask for another?" And when her nephew pointed out that Sammy Davis, Jr. seemed to be doing all right in spite of both handicaps, she said, "Them Yids always look out for their own."

Callie had been born in Harlem, but now she and her parents lived in a towering modern middle-income housing project on the Upper West Side that was integrated, in the sense that any Negro who could afford the exorbitant rents and exacting references was welcome. But the Fillmores were beginning to find it less and less attractive. The walls were so thin you could hear everything that went on in the adjoining apartments, from the Spanish family with their bongos, to the Italians with their screaming quarrels. "And with everybody running water so much of the time," Mrs. Fillmore observed, "you'd think the kids would be cleaner." Another thing that bugged her was that every time she stuck her nose outside the apartment, walked in the hall or rode in the elevator, all the white tenants made a particular point of chatting with her. "When they wouldn't give each other the time of day. Don't they figure we could use some privacy too?"

Gherkin's family had been middleclass for so many generations he wasn't even self-conscious about it any more and, when needled, would say tolerantly, "After all it's the bourgeoisie who have always, wittingly or unwittingly, footed the bills for revolutions." The Rosenblums lived in an East Side cooperative that they'd owned for ages, so it wasn't like one of those very expensive new ones, still. . . . Yet that didn't embarrass him either; the only thing that seemed to bother him was the fact that his father was a dentist. He apparently thought there was something slightly shameful about this noble old profession.

Gherkin's mother didn't have a job. She'd been a model up until before her first child, Gherkin's older sister—now married to a successful L.A. podiatrist—was born, and had never gone back to work, since Dr. Rosenblum disapproved of women's working unless it was for some really important reason, like helping put their husbands through dental school. "Now Roz and I're both grown-up,

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Mom's active on a lot of committees and things," Gherkin said contemptuously, but Calliope didn't see anything wrong with that—or with a wife's not having to work either.

Gherkin didn't seem to mind that Callie had phoned him at home, but, then, even if he did, he'd be careful not to show it. So, probably would his parents even if they could tell about her from her voice. Liberals were sneaky that way. "I guess Mom and Dad must've been out mooning over that house they're buying in the West Seventies."

"In the West Seventies! How come they're not moving out to Long Island like all the other—uh—prosperous people?"

"They say leaving the city would be copping-out." And he and Callie laughed richly at the idea that parents could ever think *anything* they did could be other than a cop-out.

"Tell me about the house; is it a brownstone and are your folks turning it into apartments or are they going to occupy the whole thing themselves?"

"Who can afford to keep up a private house in New York these days, even on the West Side?" he said, blissfully unconscious of capitalistic overtones. "Also I understand there's a tax advantage if they make it over into two duplexes . . . with a little hole in the basement for some unfortunate troglodytes. They're—" he mimicked what was presumably his mother's voice, since there was no reason to suppose his father squeaked "—looking for a really congenial family to move into the other duplex. Guess they don't care who takes the basement as long as they're—" he met Callie's eye "—quiet."

"How many rooms are there and is there much of a garden and isn't it a pity that'll go with the basement apartment?"

Gherkin said he believed they were planning to run back stairs down from the first floor into the garden so that the basement dwellers should be deprived of all advantages. Aside from that, he didn't know anything about the house; what was more, he didn't care.

"Aren't you even a *little* bit curious?" Calliope was a nest-builder; she would have loved to see the house and discuss renovations and wallpaper patterns and help plan bathrooms. She wished that she had the courage to demand a confrontation with his mother, an introduction, anyway. . . . "How come *you* never answered the phone? Were you out all weekend too?"

"Haven't you listened to anything I've been telling you? I was off in—" he gave a little laugh "—Greenland."

"You mean you were there all weekend, not just Friday night?"

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He looked at her puzzled and said he thought he'd made it clear the trip had lasted two days and three nights, the way it actually had been. For some milky reason it bothered her that everything else should have been so distorted and not time. Also, where had his body been all the time his body was out, just lying there where it was—someplace in Long Island, he said—in a stupor? Probably on a cold floor too. If he didn't blow his mind, he'd probably get pneumonia.

When he asked her flat out if she wanted to make the trip with him next weekend, she said no, but only for openers, because she knew in the end she would agree . . . curious to experience what he had experienced, but even more, afraid that if she refused he would take some other girl to share this thing, whatever it was, with him.

Then, after she'd said yes, all right, she'd go, stop rapping at her, he happened to mention real casual in passing, oh, by the way, the cat who headed up the operation had said he shouldn't bring anybody over eighteen. Didn't Gherkin realize what a sinister stipulation that was? Because even nowadays when it was common knowledge that each year after you hit twenty-one you died a little until by the time you reached thirty you weren't you any more, just a duffy (which was mostly what was wrong with the world today; the duffies were running it); still, what with the laws being duffy laws, nobody who dealt with anything real made a deliberate effort to attract jailbait and add to his load.

"Sure they're not witches or like that looking for a bee-yo-ti-ful young virgin to sacrifice on the altar of their unspeakable lusts?"

He looked at her, doubtful, she saw, in spite of her quavering laugh, whether a joke was intended, wondering whether in the crannies of her mind she really believed in that kind of thing, dark voodoo traditions handed down from her barbaric forebears and such. It came to her then that maybe what had held him off her all these months was not that she was black (actually a kind of light brown, but to describe or think of oneself as anything but black was a cop-out these days, unless of course you were white) but that she wasn't primitive over and beyond the average sixteen-year-old female norm, thus destroying his entire white racist male preconception of what black girls, even high I.Q. literate types, were like; and she hoped that now it would be brought out into the open, so she could stomp on his ego a little, but he skidded lily-livered over the topic. "No reason to suppose nowadays that just because a girl is under eighteen she's still a virgin. Anyway, they didn't say bring a girl; they said bring a friend, no

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sex specified. They explained that man's creative powers are . . . uh . . . at their height when you're seventeen or eighteen, then they start declining. I guess maybe they meant the stuff wouldn't work as well in older people, so why waste it? Which makes sense."

Which was one of the things that worried her. So few things made sense nowadays that the rational was almost automatically suspect. Moreover, the vibrations she got from this whole thing were very bad. She tried to pin him down. "Just how did you find out about this pad?" It wasn't a pad, strictly speaking, he said. He'd called a number that appeared in an advertisement he'd read in the *Village Voice,* and she didn't find too much comfort in this, yet not enough on which to base a positive objection, as if, for instance, it had been the *East Village Other.*

"Exactly what did this ad say?"

"Oh, something like 'enterprising young individuals willing to travel who wanted to go on an unusual trip, all expenses paid.' They played it real cool."

"They sure did," she agreed, thinking of ways and means to get out of her promise.

In the days that followed she didn't see too much of Gherkin for, being a scholarship student and timorous about the privileges which she could not bring herself to consider as her just and proper due, she picketed only during study periods, choosing only the most genteel of the demonstrations to which to lend shy support . . . while Gherkin cut classes and accused the police of unnatural Oedipal relationships with the reckless abandon of one whose parents would, if he blew the finals, subsidize another semester; even, supposing the administration got up on its hind legs and dumped him, arrange for his transfer to another, less illiberal institution.

She felt guilty at not being able to commit herself totally to battling at his side in the academic arena; however, this onus at least was lifted from her at midweek when, after several vigorous redefinitions of principle, the campus demonstrations polarized along racial lines, whites uptown, blacks down, while her own Ladies' Picket Line and Marching Society (so-called by its detractors) outside the cafeteria dissolved as the question of edible food on campus took on a picayune aspect against the weighty, even if undefined, or perhaps because undefined, issues that spurred the other demonstrators on.

Her heart leapt when a journalism student from the uptown campus brought word that the trouble there had escalated into a really kinetic confrontation between students and police, ending with the corrupt minions of the power

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structure *wantonly* attacking a group of peaceful, unarmed, soft-spoken youths, beating them with nightsticks, kicking them in their respective groins, and performing other typical acts of police brutality before dragging them into vans and taking them to the station where they were even now being submitted to unspeakable tortures. Although Calliope sincerely hoped Gherkin had not been injured, she would have rejoiced to have him briefly jugged, for, in short, long enough to make it impossible for them to start on their trip that Friday.

However, even allowing for the standard overstatement that was the only meaningful method for oppressed minorities to get their message through the biased barrier of the middle-class mass media, the whole tale proved to have but slight connection with the actual fact, which was that the police had mistakenly thrown the head of the mathematics department out of a window under the impression that he was president of the university. After a good laugh all round, the day's demonstration had broken up in a display of unusual student-police rapport. Gherkin was untrammeled, eager to keep their Friday afternoon tryst; and his eagerness, she knew, was not for her, but for that damned fur girl whom he expected to meet with again in the green pastures of his mind.

"But why do we have to stay the *whole* weekend?" Calliope asked mournfully as they got into the subway.

"I guess that's how long it takes to . . . uh . . . work. Or for us to come out of it." He looked apprehensive. "You did give your folks some kind of cover story, didn't you? I mean, they're not going to send out a search party or anything?"

"What do you think I am, a child? I told them I was staying over at Marjorie's, and, since they don't know Marjorie, they think everything's all sand and sweet potatoes. Only . . . well, I kind of hate to lie to them . . ." her voice getting very small at the end.

He looked stern. "Well, if they're so narrow-minded there's nothing you can do *but* lie to them. Fundamentally they're the ones who are to blame for forcing you into dishonesty. It's a black mark against them, not you."

White mark, pink mark, green mark . . . did he have to say *black*? "What did you tell your folks?" she asked. "Or are they above prying into your private life?"

He made a bubbling noise, a sound of contempt. "If they were they wouldn't be parents. I told them I was spending the weekend with some fellows upstate doing something manly like killing small animals. There wasn't any alternative. Until the family as a concept is either restructured or elim-

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inated entirely, the only way to deal with parents is to lie to them."

But why bother to lie unless to keep from hurting their feelings, because he loved them? In which case was it the hypocrisy or the love that was the hang-up? From his quickness to accuse everyone with whom he differed of maternal incest, Callie had deduced that he had a complex, and she had already indulged in interesting speculations as to the possibility of the green girl's standing for his mother, in which case the fur and tail must have some deep significance which she couldn't quite put her finger on.

"Is green your mother's favorite color?" she asked.

"No," he said, "but it was her maiden name."

There, if that didn't prove something she didn't know what did.

They rode all the way to the end of the line in Queens, where the subway became an elevated, so they had to walk down stairs to leave, which gave her such a shot of the uncannies she felt as if she had already started on the trip; after all, what could be weirder than a subway up in the air! Then there was a bus that humped along for half an hour before disgorging them somewhere that looked like the middle of nowhere. From here, Gherkin said, they would take bicycles.

"*Bicycles!* You're putting me on. In the first place, where on Earth will we get bicycles? In the second—"

"They'll be behind that shed waiting for us." And so they were, two Schwinn Racers, leaning against the wall, very shiny and new looking and not a soul in sight. Must be a very honest neighborhood, she thought resentfully.

She hesitated before committing herself to the machine . . . fearful for her mind, her body, even her suddenly precious virginity. She had never ridden a bicycle before. She had never had any desire to ride a bicycle.

"Lucky you aren't wearing a skirt because they're both boy bicycles."

"You know I practically never wear a skirt."

"Well, what are you waiting for?"

No help for it; she mounted. "You sure you know the way there?" she asked, wobbling down the street more or less alongside him; luckily there was little traffic. "All we need to make it a real boss evening is to get lost out here in the wilderness."

"As a matter of fact, I don't know the way. These are homing bicycles."

"Oh, come off it. Enough's enough, you know what I mean? If you don't want to tell me your little secrets, okay, but don't pick a time when I'm in peril of life

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and limb to get cutesy." Still, funny thing, although she was pedalling furiously, she didn't seem fully in control. First she ascribed this to unfamiliarity with the machine. Then once, when Gherkin started turning a corner and she, absorbed in her own chatter, kept going in a relatively straight line, it seemed that her bicycle actually turned itself to follow him. But that was just imagination; probably her unconscious had been following Gherkin faithfully all along.

Bicycles and riders stopped in front of a large warehouse, the kind of blatantly nondescript building movie gangsters use as a front, and there was a cat sitting outside watching them, a real, pussy-type cat, a ginger tom, wearing a gold collar studded with green stones. It eyed them, then turned and trotted into the building; Calliope had the weirdest feeling that it had gone ahead to announce them.

By the time they'd propped the bicycles tidily against the brick warehouse wall, a man had come out to lead them in, a lithe, red-haired fellow with a pointed face and green eyes and skin so white it looked as if he had been presoaked in Clorox. He wore something that looked like a cross between a skin diver's gear and an astronaut's outfit in pearly form-fitting vinyl, very mod and probably very expensive. The whole set-up inside looked expensive, sterile and functional to the point of ostentation and (Gherkin was right) much more like a laboratory than someone's pad. Too ridiculous for words if they'd fallen into the hands of a cliche, a mad scientist.

Calliope had intended to ask all kinds of questions, but somehow there she was being ushered into something sinisterly like a dentist's chair (a spillover from Gherkin's unconscious?) before she even had a chance to open her mouth. Pretty fast going—except that it *didn't seem fast; it seemed more* as if time had been slowed down for her while the cat was moving along at normal speed. Just the same you'd think there'd be some kind of formalities, an exchange of false names, something by way of transition if not convention. "But what *is* all this stuff?" she demanded, as the man fussed with dials and levers on a thing that looked like a computer or a giant control board, something terribly technological whatever it was.

"Surely your friend has told you?" He had a slight foreign accent.

"He talked but he didn't say anything really meaningful about the experience. He didn't—"

"I didn't understand it too well myself," Gherkin explained from a nearby . . . cubicle . . . sort of . . . where he was being installed in another dentist-type chair by a black-haired man wearing a black

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vinyl outfit with white sneakers. He had green eyes too, the same whiter-than-white skin.

"You thought it wisest to let him interpret his own experience," the red-haired one said. "Sound thinking, especially as your communications—"

"I'm not a—hey!" Calliope screamed. "You stop that, do you hear me, man? Nobody said anything 'bout being strapped down. I positively refuse to—"

"Believe me, it's necessary." The man snicked the buckles or whatever the fastenings actually were. "It lessens the initial discomfort of the trip. Otherwise you might be crushed."

"You let me out of here right away or I'll scream the place down—" she began. Then she saw he wasn't there—at least not near her. She could see him in another compartment strapping himself into a chair and so was the other cat, the black one with white paws, and it was funny because not only was the compartment outside her line of sight but the wall between was opaque; and it was then she realized that at some point along the line—she could see now what Gherkin had meant when he said he couldn't explain how the stuff had been administered—she had been started on her way into the trackless wilderness of her own mind. The whole building seemed to shudder; there was a distinct sensation of movement, a funny smell, and a force squashed down on her. The ginger cat hadn't been putting her on about being crushed. "If you just relax," he called over, "you'll find take-off easier. Try to breathe naturally."

But how could you breathe naturally when nothing else was natural, when you were being flattened into a flapjack while at the same time somebody'd started to play some of that awfully modern music which can give you a headache at the best of times, especially when you have to make like you enjoy it, but politeness is not called for at a moment when you are attempting to carry out your threat to scream your head off, knowing at the same time nobody outside is likely to hear you above the banging and screeching and whining, through the walls of time and space and apathy. Besides, those weren't her own screams vibrating in her head; they were Gherkin's. Probably he was turning inside out again and if we ever do get back from this lousy rotten trip she thought as something chopped her into mincemeat with long neat even strokes I'm going to turn him inside out for real.

Finally she whited out, and when she came to, she was in what looked to be that exact same other world Gherkin had been talking about, and there was a fuzzy green chick staring at her in a mixture of

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perplexity and amusement, though how Calliope knew this was more than she could tell, because the other girl's face was completely expressionless in human terms, she not being human by a long shot, though definitely, enviably, mammalian. First Callie thought this had to be the same green girl as Gherkin's; then she told herself, irritated, it couldn't possibly be. His was in his dream and this was her dream. But why would she dream about a girl at all, especially a busty green gorilla girl? There she'd been wondering if Gherkin had problems and look at what she herself dreamed about.

The green girl spoke. "Oh, gosh, golly, gee, somebody has goofed but good!" Only her lips didn't move; she was talking and her lips didn't move.

"Telepathy, that's how I come to understand you, isn't it?" Callie asked alertly.

The girl seemed to smile except she didn't really and said, still without moving her lips, "That's close enough, or as close as you can get with your . . ." there was a mind blur that resolved itself into "limited communication ability . . . point is there was a terrible mistake. Baby, you're not supposed to be making this scene a-tall."

"Not even equal opportunity dreams these days," Callie muttered.

The green girl's eyes unmistakably widened. "But why should color, of all the kooky things, hang us up? I admit you folks being all naked and plucked-looking like that . . ." definite projection of disgust ". . . is a little hard to take, but I guess you can't help the way you look."

"Well, I wouldn't be naked if somebody hadn't swiped my threads," Callie pointed out reasonably.

"They were taken off you in quarantine; you'll get them back at checkout time. Necessary health precaution. Sorry you have to show yourself all raw like that but rules are rules." She added musingly, "Hard to think of an intelligent life form, even a primitive one, without fur, or, at the very least, feathers, but the . . ." a thought blur resolved itself into something like "Scouts . . . claim you have an intellectual potential almost as good as ours. Tell me, was there some kind of disaster on your planet? An epidemic or a fire?"

"Not that I know of. We come like this."

"Of course you normally wear coverings to hide your deficiencies, so you can't be totally insensitive. Matter of fact it's those coverings of yours that started the whole mix-up. The Scouts said the different sexes of your species wore different kinds of threads and males had shorter crest fur. I told everybody the Scouts weren't as smart as they cracked themselves up to be, but everybody said we had to

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listen to them; they knew everything; they would save us." Her mind went "Tcha!"

"Well, straight types do do the different hair, different threads bit so I guess you could say it operates as a general rule. But it isn't the—what did you call them?—Scouts' fault; you can't expect foreigners to be on top of things when practically everybody over the age of twenty-five doesn't know what it's all about, you know what I mean?"

"We needed young people," the girl said after a moment of blankness. "The Scouts claimed your males are at their breeding best around seventeen or eighteen of your years; after that their fertility starts to decline, and fertility's what we're after."

Enlightenment came to Calliope with the eclat of a comic strip light bulb exploding in a balloon overhead. "Oh, then that's what you wanted studs for. As studs. I'm sorry I turned out to be the wrong sex."

"It certainly wasn't your fault," the girl said with equal politeness. "The Scouts should've been more careful."

"It must be pretty rough on you, feeling the way you do about us to have to—do you do it the same way? But of course you'd have to or the project would never have gotten off the ground in the first place."

"The idea is . . . nauseating. . . ." Only, the concept in her mind was much more so than nauseating; when these green folks tossed their cookies, looked as if they really went for broke. "But if it really is your only chance of keeping the race going, we'll just have to sacrifice ourselves."

This was total commitment, indeed! Callie studied the other girl, wondering whether she would be able to sink herself in the greater good if called upon to couple with an alopecic baboon. "But do you think it'll work out, honey? Even though science isn't my bag, I can see we're pretty drastically different. . . ."

"The Scouts've been dragging around any life forms they could find who were even remotely like us and laying them on our doorstep," the girl said despondently. "None of the likely-looking ones panned out and now they're really scraping barrel-bottom. You see, the trouble is our males seem to have lost their viability. There hasn't been a kid born in—oh. . . ."

The thought seemed to indicate a very long stretch of time, but then they lived a very long stretch of time, much longer than human beings. Still, they weren't anything like immortal and, until the Scouts arrived, all involved with taking up the superior species' burden, it looked as if the race were going to die out. The Scouts, as Callie had already gathered, were the cats who had started her and Gherkin

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on their trip. They were, the green girl said, a race of do-gooders, roving the galaxies, bringing aid and comfort to the lesser breeds, both within and without the law, and whether they wanted it or not. At first the green folk had been glad to see them, even hopeful, but by now a lot of them, present company included, present company particularly, were beginning to think race extinction might be preferable. "Specially if we did happen to mesh and the offspring turned out to look like—like some of the species they fetched in. Still, they did say our characteristics would be dominant, so it did seem worth a try. Just the same, it's all been so horrible, sometimes I think it's a nightmare; I'll wake up and find it never happened."

"But it is a—" Calliope broke off, not wanting to hurt the illusion's feelings. "I know how you must feel," she said.

The girl seemed displeased. "Forgive me, but you couldn't possibly have the least *inkling* of how we feel. Oh, I'm sure you mean well, but you're so alien you wouldn't even begin to understand us, let alone identify. You have such an utterly different life experience."

Some people—some creatures—thought they were so special. But Calliope was not going to bicker with a creation of her own mind. "Guess I might as well go back home since I don't seem to be playing any meaningful role here."

"'Fraid that's out of the question. Spaceship isn't scheduled to go back until . . . your Sunday night . . . looks as if you're stuck here for the weekend."

Spaceship! Callie thought . . . said. . . . "Spaceship?" But this whole happening was only a dream, a hallucination, a trip—and, of course, the spaceship fitted in nicely with that part of it. Golly, I am immature; first a spaceship, next Santa Claus complete with reindeer.

The green one's inward-outward smile was more like a sneer. If she was as smart as she claimed, she'd know she wasn't real. But of course she wouldn't admit it; no one likes to admit he's been made up, especially by someone he despises.

"Long as you are our guest, you might as well see the sights . . ." although the phrase she actually projected was more like "encompass the ambience insofar as your limited faculties allow."

And she led Callie from the indeterminate quasi-subjective place where they had been holding their mental chat to somewhere efinitely out-of-doors, only park-lik storybook out-of-doors, only maybe that was the way Callie's "limited faculties" perceived it. The air had an odd, tangy quality to it. Maybe that was where Gherkin had got the original idea of fresh air. No, that had been—was—

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the smell of the drug cutting through the hallucination to remind her once again that it wasn't real . . . that the furred green youth who leaned morosely against a tree and plucked some kind of stringed instrument while he sang a sad song of some unrequited emotion that was definitely not love was also, regrettably, no more than a product of her imagination.

"Here's a little treat for you, meatball," the green girl mocked, her attitude a familiarity devoid of friendliness that to the Earth mind interpreted itself as marriage. "Seems there was a mistake in the shipment and our loss looks to be your gain."

Ignoring his fellow life form, the boy looked at Calliope. He had green fur, a tail, humanoid but quite inhuman features. He was the handsomest creature she had ever seen and for a moment she felt overwhelming shame at her bald state, seeing herself as she must seem to him—napless, naked, primitive, perhaps even bestial. Never before had she abased herself simply to please a male, but, as the tender emotion engulfed her—for the first time, she realized now—she forgot feminism in femininity and tried to look winsome and petlike.

Then the first mind surge reached her from him, longing and lingering, and she knew that he saw her as more than a mascot. The hallucination turned out to be a dream of a dream, as she lost all identity, black, human, female, and merged, submerged in his.

Or, as she told Gherkin later, "We grooved at first sight." He and she were in the subway now, starting to come out of the nebulous state in which their trip had left them, so spaced out they could barely remember either their arrival at the warehouse or their departure therefrom. Half in a dream, they had mounted their bicycles and a quarter in a dream they had got on the bus; now, in the IRT, they were coming back to full consciousness. "I never dug anyone the way I did him." The whole thing had been, as in Gherkin's own apt summation of his previous dream experience, "like wow." She gave a little, self-realizing laugh. "Course I know it was only a hallucination but it was really out of this world, you know what I mean." She snuggled against him, to make her point clearer. He didn't respond. And the old hang-ups that the dream had blotted out came inkling back. "What's bugging you? Afraid somebody'll lynch us for being mix instead of match?"

"Stop projecting your hostilities," he said absently. "What's dragging me is it's funny we should both've made the same vision scene."

"Well, I guess it's like mass

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hypnosis or the collective unconscious if you can mass or collect with only two. What I mean is you told me so much about your first time that it seemed like real, so I must've just psyched I was in the same place having the same experience . . . and maybe, even while we were hallucinating, we communicated somehow, so our minds crisscrossed and came back with the same scene, you know what I mean?"

"If it was my scene how come they didn't say anything to me about the race dying out and how they needed guys from here to give it a shot in the arm or wherever? They kept it from me, and you know why? They didn't want me to know I was being *used*, like a—a stallion," he finished, finding morbid pleasure in the noble concept of himself as a proud-maned Arabian steed.

She looked at him, incredulous. She grabbed his arm and shook him. "Gherkin, baby, you're falling out of your tree. The whole thing was a hallucination, spelled D-R-E-AM. Nobody's been keeping anything from you; that was my own variation on your theme. The green people, the green place, they were just in our minds." And when his face stayed shut in resolute, mulish blankness—"Okay, if you insist it's got to make solid down-to-Earth sense, how come you were able to breathe their air, drink their water?"

"You mean you were dopey enough to drink the water without boiling it first? How could you be so careless, even in a dream? I made sure—" He stopped and then, thank God, he broke up and she relaxed thinking it's okay; it's all going to be okay.

"I guess maybe like a few gears did like slip out of place," he admitted as his laughter ebbed, "but they're back in line." He went on ruefully. "Guess I'm a little squeeged because I didn't dream about the same chick this time as I did last. It was another green girl. Looked like the first one and claimed she was the same, but I knew she wasn't. There was no communion; we didn't dig each other at all. Now why would I have dreamed a thing like that?"

She was taken aback, not realizing that he would know the difference right off or that it would have been so big and bad a difference. But what reality could stack up against a dream, she consoled herself. Would the actual Gherkin ever be able to hold a candle to the man of her dream? She tried to visualize green velvet features overflowing and encompassing Gherkin's pasty, pimply pubescent face. Difficult, but given time—especially if Gherkin could be persuaded to grow a beard; the whole concept of hair flowered into new meaning (besides, pubescent *did* mean hairy, didn't it?)—it could become less in-

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congruous. He could, she could, they both could. . . .

She made her voice soft, gentle, croodling. "You thought you dreamed about a different girl because this time there really was a different girl—a real girl, to wit, me, you know what I mean?"

"No, I do not know what you mean!"

She forced herself not to snap back. "Look, I definitely made the sex scene with *somebody*. And who else was there except those cats, which I don't think. . . ."

He had to agree. "No, not the cats. They're . . . like inhuman."

"Definite duffy types."

He suggested feebly, "Maybe you just imagined you—"

"No doubt about that part of it. Believe me, I know. And it was like great." She looked at him fondly. "I'm only sorry I couldn't come up to your first trip."

He swallowed hard, gulping down what reason told him had to be fact, unless he wanted to accept the fact that he had really flipped. "If it did happen it was all balled up so it—my feelings have nothing to do with you personally. I mean, what I felt, what you felt, had nothing to do with objective reality, even if what happened had some basis of realism." He burst out, "But, for Pete's sake, if you're right then who did I make it with the first time? There wasn't any girl there with me."

Why tell him now that the original green girl had likely been a symbolic version of his beautiful ex-model mother? Save it for another, more hostile occasion. So all she said was, tactfully, "She must've been a real illusion; that's probably why she was so out-of-this-world good."

When they got back to their respective abodes that evening, their parents and the TV broadcasts were full of news, distorted as usual through having been filtered through the establishment viewpoint. There had been a really definitive confrontation on campus, with all classes suspended indefinitely pending the release of the dean, whom the Divinity School students were holding hostage until their prayers were answered. "Mind you, Janet," Mrs. Fillmore said, "I don't want you going anywhere near the campus until the police are called off, because you're especially vulnerable. They'll hit you when they'd never dare touch a white girl."

"They hit white girls, too, Mama; I've seen the bruises."

Her mother gave her a tolerant I-know-better-than-you look. "You're not to join any picket lines, you hear? You're not even to stand around playing a supportive role. Participation in the total school experience is important, but not if it means there's

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any chance of my little girl getting hurt. You better spend the next few days in the public library doing some constructive studying."

But, once she knew there would be no classes, Calliope had other plans. Her commitments had been re-oriented in a direction more classic than either scholarship or political activism. She had telephoned Marjorie, the graduate student with whom she'd been supposedly spending the weekend to get the lowdown on what had actually happened; however, Marjorie was preoccupied with problems of her own and was taking this Heaven-sent opportunity to go to Puerto Rico for an abortion, as she had found herself in what seemed an especially sorry position for a Home Economics major. Although she'd be glad to have Calliope use her apartment while she was gone—and, indeed, after her return; group activities were not only more humanistic but meant there would always be somebody to remind you to keep from adding to the population problem—she warned her to be particularly careful not to get herself in the same predicament. But that was the one thing in the whole sex-experience of which Calliope had no fear. She had been hopefully taking the pill ever since her fifteenth birthday without having its efficacy tested even once.

She persuaded Gherkin to quit his picket line, and together they repaired to Marjorie's apartment to experience mutually conscious conjugation for the first time. It was, though neither wanted to admit it at first, no good. All the groove, all the wow had been in the drug, the gas, whatever it had been. It was everything; they were nothing . . . or so it seemed then. "No wonder they can afford to give it away free at the beginning," Callie mourned. "It would be awful easy to get strung up on it."

"Yeah," he said, "it sure would."

There was a dread in her—more than in him because, despite his glib prattle of drugs as a necessary part of the total human experience, he'd never had to live with junkies on every streetcorner—that she might from now on never be able to re-achieve what in retrospect she recognized must have been that old soap-opera standby . . . ecstasy . . . without chemical assistance. And that was just about the worst scene of all. It meant you were crippled from the start. So, when Gherkin reassumed his academic responsibilities and joined the occupation forces by now in virtual charge of the uptown campus, she called upon Dave Kikipu, leader of the Junior African Militants and, like all the demonstration leaders, a big man on campus—athletes were absolutely nowhere these days—and, both black and white

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co-eds said, a Master of Sex as well as Science (the latter being the degree toward which he was working; he aimed to be a high-school teacher and help young minds to upshoot).

Since Calliope was a brand he had for some time desired to snatch from the burning—going steady with a white man being a mortal sin these days—he delegated power for an afternoon to a subordinate in order to come to the apartment to wrestle with Calliope's soul and whatever else needed wrestling with. "I'm glad to see you're gaining a sense of black identity and refusing to have anything to do with that racist white bastard," he said—nothing personal against Gherkin, of course, just a matter of principle. After which they got down to the nitty gritty. Dave was older than Gherkin, more experienced than Gherkin, more accomplished than Gherkin would, perhaps, ever be. From him Calliope derived a considerable degree of what might have under different circumstances been pleasure. But it was still not like wow; it would never, she knew now, be like wow unassisted by the cats, the Scouts, whatever you called those archfiends or demigods who stood between her and Abraham's bosom. "Now you know what Black Power is all about," he said when he left. But it was Green Power she craved.

She didn't care now if she blew her mind all over the Universe and eternally compromised her chromosomes; she had to have more of the stuff. She had trouble, though, persuading Gherkin to go out to the Island with her the next Friday afternoon. Finally he was badgered into admitting that since it was his first experience he wanted to relive, not his second, he felt she would be a hindrance. By dint of coaxing plus whitemail she made him take her there, but, when they got to the end of the bus line and looked behind the shed—no bicycles.

"Maybe somebody else is using them," Gherkin said, and both remembered uneasily that at the end of the previous outing no invitation had been extended for a further trip . . . so far as they could recall. Yet, even if no longer welcome, they had to make one last push for Nirvana, so they rented wheels and for the next few days toured the borough of Queens and the neighboring county of Nassau, even extending their search to the border marches of Suffolk. Long Island is a big place, full of warehouses, but they never found the one they sought. As a last, desperate, almost ritual measure, they called the original telephone number through which Gherkin had made contact, but it was no longer, a recorded voice informed them, a working number. While the *Vil-*

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lage Voice said with hauteur that it couldn't possibly give out information about its paid advertisers.

From here on they lost contact with the rational and would have freaked out completely had they been able to. They tried everything they could get their hands on—pot (the real stuff this time), acid, speed, junk, and something the boys in the chem lab had whipped up during an all-night sit-in that was reported not only to bend minds but tie them in bowknots. Not only did all these potions fail to have the desired effect on them, they failed to have any effect at all. They would have thought they were being screwed again, as viz. the original catnip episode, but their companions—these were the standard guided tours, no more private blast-offs—exhibited all satisfactory signs of going off and away. In fact their own immunity was beginning to cause such comment they had to drop out of the drug scene entirely. "It's like those other trips had like inoculated us against anything else," Gherkin observed.

"Sounds like a great built-in commercial gimmick except where are they now to slice the bread?" She cast her eyes up to the heavens. "Come back, come back wherever you are, baby," she pleaded, "you got customers!"

"Don't be—" Gherkin began, stopped.

"Sacrilegious? Blasphemous? You pays your money and you takes your choice. If there is a choice."

"Don't be silly. I mean, that was what I was going to say: Don't be silly."

After the university library got itself blown up by a person or persons unknown (the students said deliberate police provocation but everyone knew the abolition of books had been a prime plank in several activist platforms), the administration finally terminated the spring term two weeks ahead of schedule. Both Gherkin and Calliope had jobs lined up for the summer; however, a week before Callie was to start in as office aide for one of her mother's causes, she woke up one morning and a little voice told her she was pregnant—and, when she went to the doctor, so she proved to be!

"But I thought girls didn't get pregnant any more these days!" Gherkin cried, when apprised of this development.

Whereupon Callie burst into tears, saying she was sorry, she guessed she was just a square and was going to have a square baby. But definitely a baby. She could show him the doctor's report and everything.

"Didn't you . . . take precautions?" He'd been under the impression women nowadays took them as casually as tranquillizers, and for pretty much the same reason.

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"Sure I took pills! It must've been the same deal as the catnip. I got sold ersatz."

"Poor little thing," he said, suddenly very masculine and manly —after all in a month he was going to be eighteen, a responsible adult—"you need someone to take care of you." And, moved by the impulses of his ancient bourgeois heritage, he offered marriage which she, descendant of slaves, accepted immediately. She didn't bother to mention the interim episode, which didn't count, she assured herself, because the thing between Dave and herself had been purely mechanistic, not a real relationship. Besides, no chance at all Dave would marry her—marriage, he always declared, was a device the ruling classes had laid on their oppressed subjects—and right then in her panic all she wanted was a solid establishment-approved alliance.

Although the two were conscious of having violated no meaningful moral code, they were not sanguine about what would happen when they told their tradition-oriented parents what was on the agendum—which they did forthwith, as under the System, pregnancy, marriage, all the formalities of a corrupt society cost money and the subsidies might as well start at once. Things turned out worse even than anticipated. A lot of acrimonious rhetoric; then Mrs. Rosenblum got Callie aside and said not that she didn't *welcome* her as a daughter-in-law but didn't she think she was too young to take on the wife-mother role? If she wanted to—er—"prevent" the baby, Mrs. Rosenblum was sure her Uncle Joe—

At which, Callie, more out of fear than moral dismay (Marjorie had smoked out for weeks on grisly accounts of her ordeal) set up such a lamentation that Mrs. Rosenblum said hastily, "I was only suggesting it for your own sake, dear. Naturally Dr. Rosenblum and I are delighted. . . ." Then she burst into tears herself. A very painful scene.

All this, of course, before the elder Fillmores and Rosenblums had met and, to their offspring's disgust, fallen in love at first sight. Incidentally, Mrs. Rosenblum had been a terrible disappointment to Callie. Instead of a willowy statuesque goddess, she was a small, pert, not-really-pretty creature who dressed like a teenager and almost got away with it. Callie's father wasn't at all disappointed, but, then, of course, Mr. Fillmore'd had no expectations to stack her up against. "Sure is a good-looking woman, isn't she? And so young to be the mother of grown children."

And Mrs. Fillmore, who had eight years on the sunny side of Mrs. Rosenblum and so could afford tolerance, gave a dreamy smile and murmured, "Doesn't Dr.

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Rosenblum look just like Paul Newman?"

"Looks more like Sam Levene to me," Mr. Fillmore observed without rancor.

Gherkin reported that the Rosenblums had seemed equally appreciative. "Sidney Poitier was what Mom laid on your father. And Dad asked me man-to-man if it was true black women had more—" he waved his hands "—vibrations than white ones?" He chuckled richly. "He should only know!"

Both sets of parents agreed that although it was a pity the two had to get married at so early an age, kids did marry young these days and it would all work out. So Callie and Gherkin were stuck, but only for the time being. As the era in which they lived was, despite all its drawbacks and hang-ups, still a step from the Victorian, marriage represented a temporary stretch rather than an eternal sentence. At the end of their pearly path of penance there hung the bright beacon of divorce.

Their mothers took hold and organized everything, and it didn't take any super-perception to see how things were trending. Almost inevitable the Rosenblums should feel the Fillmores were the right family for the other duplex, while the little basement apartment would be "just perfect for the kids." The baby could bask in the garden soaking up sunshine and fresh air while Janet did her schoolwork, because, although she would have to take some leave of absence, she must go on to get her degree; even more important these days for a girl to finish college than a boy because of the symbolic values involved. "Talk about the color problem," Mrs. Rosenblum said, "it's *nothing* compared to the sex thing."

And Mrs. Fillmore didn't dare disagree, because it might sound like a betrayal of her female identity. Very hard being a member of two oppressed groups.

While Callie was away at school, Mrs. Rosenblum planned busily, she would look after the baby and her community activities would simply have to be squeezed into odd moments, because she always felt helping the young mind unfold was one of the most important, *rewarding* pursuits in the world. And Mrs. Fillmore, who, after fifteen years in the New York school system, was less starry-eyed about the unfolding young mind, said she would do her part weekdays and evenings so the young couple would be free to pursue their intellectual and social activities unhampered by the ties of premature parenthood.

"But you're going to have to keep away from all those riots and protests, Sanford," Mrs. Rosenblum told her son. "You have a grave responsibility toward your unborn child. It isn't right to have

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her—or him, I suppose—start life handicapped by a father who's a jailbird."

"I don't think it's right for a father-to-be to have to spend the summer as a counsellor for a bunch of vicious j.d.'s."

"They are not juvenile delinquents, merely disturbed underprivileged inner city boys. And if they do develop antisocial tendencies it will be as the result of intolerant attitudes like yours. No, your father and I don't expect you to go to camp this summer; of course you'll be staying with Janet. Poor little thing, she seems absolutely terrified and of course bearing an interracial child at the age of seventeen is a very difficult thing to have happen to a girl."

"A woman is old enough to be a mother as soon as she reaches the age of puberty," Gherkin declared. "It's the unnatural prolongation of adolescence in this society that's caused so many hang-ups and stuff."

"If you want to quit school and start hustling your own bread, Sanford," Dr. Rosenblum observed, "far be it from me to stop you."

"Shush, Herbert, you know perfectly well these days nobody can get a decent job without having at least a master's, so we owe it to the children to see them both through their doctorates. They must be protected against the future. You never know what might happen—revolution or an atomic war; they should have the best." She also protected them against the present by enrolling them in a Better Parenthood Course, at which Gherkin waxed almost apoplectic. However, Callie accepted the idea of the course with docility. She wanted to be a better parent.

Their intertribal names, inevitably revealed in the course of the family dialogues, caused some surprise. The Rosenblums were primarily amused. "Gherkin's certainly no worse than Sanford," Dr. Rosenblum said, Sanford being a name on Mrs. Rosenblum's side of the family, descended from Samuel, and Dr. Rosenblum had taken exception to it from the start. However, to Mrs. Fillmore, Calliope's sobriquet was a personal insult. "My mother never had the opportunity to get an education. She worked as a domestic and didn't know any better than to name me Lobelia. But you've had every advantage, Janet, including the name of Janet, and I'll thank you to ask your friends—and relations—to call you that." For a while she had strong hostility feelings toward Mrs. Rosenblum for having laughed at the names, but later she forgave her, knowing that though she might be able to understand she couldn't possibly identify.

The wedding was scheduled for as soon as possible, before Calli-

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ope started showing. "Okay, marriage," Gherkin said, when it finally got through what he was in for. "For the kid's sake, for Call—Janet's sake. But why the whole barbaric ritual of the so-called white wedding? In the first place, according to the ceremony's own symbolism, it would be downright dishonest of her to wear white—"

Here Calliope burst into tears and accused him of wanting her to wear black on black; and Mrs. Fillmore burst into tears and said she was afraid it would never work out—at the heart of every white man, no matter how well-intentioned, there was a racist. Then it was Mrs. Rosenblum's turn to burst into tears, saying Sanford was not a racist, just a rotten kid who'd never brought anything but aggravation to his parents; it ended with their all (except Gherkin) agreeing tearfully that the whole trouble wasn't color, it was man's inhumanity to man (or, specifically, man's inhumanity to woman).

The wedding turned out to be a Social Event, so much so even Callie who had been beginning to look forward to the festivities with some pleasure—she almost *died* when she heard the wedding dress was to cost three hundred dollars wholesale—came round to Gherkin's way of thinking and wanted just a private ceremony. But too late, the invitations were all out. The guest list was pretty impressive—name people from the letterheads of the causes on both sides of the family attended, people who wouldn't have dreamed of coming if the wedding had been either all black or all white. A non-sectarian clergyman made a beautiful speech about the whole thing being a step in the direction of universal brotherhood.

"If we're all sistren and brethren," Aunt Ada could be heard bellowing, "how come all the black folks is on one side of whatever you call this place—it sure ain't my idea of a church—and the white folks on t'other?" Finally she was drowned out by a soprano singing "Oh Promise Me" or "We Shall Overcome"—hard to tell over Aunt Ada's counterpoint. Then they all left the whatever it was to find a JAM picket line outside, led by Dave Kikipu, very handsome in his dashiki, carrying signs like "Black Women for Black Men." "A White Wedding Is an Affront to Black Manhood," and worse. The wedding party was driven in Cadillacs and the demonstrators drove themselves in Chevies and Volkswagons to an elegant catered reception (the usual non-dairy creamed chicken but with watermelon coupe for dessert), where Mrs. Rosenblum introduced Callie to all her relatives as "My brilliant daughter-in-law—imagine, not quite seven-

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teen and already a sophomore. A scholarship student too and you know the University doesn't give out scholarships unless you're really tops."

"Yes," Callie said, anxious to please, "they don't have a minimum black quota yet; that's one of the things the demonstrations are about, I think."

An elderly lady with blue hair said, very quick, Sanford was lucky to have such a beautiful bride and didn't Janet look like a young Lena Horne?

"How come Lena Horne ain't here?" Aunt Ada demanded. "Looks like everybody else is. How come they done left her out? And where's Sammy Davis, Jr.? Where's George Wallace?"

To which Gherkin's great-uncle Milton, a skeleton on the groom's side, over eighty with dyed hair and still fancying himself a blade, retorted, "Look, I don't like the idea of my nephew marrying a schiksa any more than you like the idea of her tying the knot with a honky, but that's the way the world is blowing; you gotta swing with the times, baby." Then he and Aunt Ada went off and killed a magnum of champagne together —"Now this is what I call real soul food!" she approved—and subsequently were discovered by Mrs. Rosenblum in a pantry, behaving in what she would only describe as "a very disgusting way." Everybody else was more admiring than shocked at this triumph of sexuality over senility and would have liked to press for details.

Later when Aunt Ada had passed out, Great-Uncle Milton told Gherkin, "I don't care what color the kid turns out—if it's a boy and I kick the bucket before it's born, you name it after me." Gherkin explained to Callie that according to Jewish belief you didn't name a baby after anybody living because it meant one or the other would die.

"But that's a primitive superstition!" she cried.

"Well, there's nobody living I'd want to name the kid after, anyhow."

The rice that was thrown after them when they left was colored; nothing personal, Gherkin assured his bristling bride, pastel-tinted rice was just an in frill these days, like the little pieces of celery in the celery tonic. Among the rice-throwers were the JAM pickets, zestfully entering into the spirit of the occasion. They had been itching to throw something, but rocks and bottles hadn't seemed nice at a wedding. Still, Gherkin was glad when the limousine got out of range. Their families had laid three weeks at a resort in the Catskills on them and no way of getting out of it because the apartment still wasn't ready. Callie fell off a horse and Gherkin nearly drowned in the lake. At that they

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seemed to be having as good a time as anybody else.

When they got back, the apartment was more or less finished, but Callie didn't have a chance to pick her wallpaper; her mother and mother-in-law had already decided paint would be more practical. As for furniture, the Rosenblums were getting all new antiques, so they bestowed as many of their old but still good pieces as could be crammed into the tiny basement upon the young people. "You should be grateful," Mrs. Fillmore said sternly. "They have some very nice things."

"Why don't you take some of them, Mama?"

"Edythe would think you didn't appreciate all she's doing for you if you gave away her beautiful things. Besides, she's got a cousin in furniture who can give us a very good buy in distressed Spanish."

Both Callie and Gherkin graduated from the Better Parenthood class with honors and learned much, including the fact that there was another side to Dr. Spock. People started giving them so many things for the baby they had to be stowed in one of the empty rooms upstairs—which was still being nerve-wrackingly renovated. "Be sure to keep the door locked," Mrs. Rosenblum advised, "you know what these workmen are like."

"Yeh," Gherkin agreed, "when they see a pile of baby bootees and hand-knitted sweaters, like something inside snaps and they *steal*!" In spite of the lock, two sacques and a receiving blanket printed with a gay Donald Duck motif disappeared.

When classes started in the fall, after violent clashes among students, faculty, police, and a number of people whose identity was never made clear, Gherkin resumed his studies while Callie spent a wretched, boring season, growing bigger and bigger and feeling more and more uncomfortable, without really getting sick enough for constant fussing. Both her mother and mother-in-law looked after her physical well-being and all that. They made her chicken soup and accompanied her to the doctor's office and told her to think uplifting thoughts, but what they were mostly interested in was the house. The Rosenblums' duplex became habitable first and they insisted the Fillmores move in with them until alterations on the top floors were complete. As for the staircase leading up from the garden, this seemed unnecessary now that they were all "one big happy family" (the phrase made Gherkin grit his teeth, at which his father told him to watch out, he was spoiling his bite; but he couldn't help it—they were taking the noble concept of the group, the tribe, and turn-

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ing it into something sordid). Besides, Mrs. Rosenblum now said, the garden really should go with the basement apartment. "But you won't mind if we old folks use it once in a while?" she asked, all roguish.

Gherkin grimaced but Callie eagerly hoped they would use it often. She wanted everybody she could get to surround her. She would even have liked Aunt Ada to be on hand but that indefatigable octogenarian had run off to Florida and points south with Uncle Milton. At intervals impudent postcards arrived.

The first year nobody used the garden, or as it was more accurately described by the Fillmores, the "backyard." It really was an eyesore—just weeds and a dead ailanthus tree. "And it takes a lot to kill one of those," Callie said. "I wonder if this really is a healthy situation."

Gherkin shrugged. "This is an unhealthy society." By this time they were already both very deep into malaise. It had dawned on them that when the baby was born they were going to be parents.

Mrs. Rosenblum was afraid people looking at the garden out of the back windows of the houses behind might get the wrong idea about their status, think they were on welfare or something. "I'd nag Sanford into doing some work on it, except he's so busy with his schoolwork . . . and Janet says she isn't feeling up to it, although Uncle Joe says she could use some exercise." This was Uncle Joe the obstetrician, as distinguished from Uncle Joe the analyst. He was one of the fanciest obstetricians in town and he was giving Callie a very special rate. "You ought to be grateful," Mrs. Fillmore said again.

All six of them ate dinner together every night upstairs when the elders didn't go out, but afterward Gherkin and Calliope would become uncomfortably aware that six was a crowd and, though politely beseeched to stay, go back down. Sitting there in their low-ceilinged, mouldy-smelling quarters, they would listen to the stamps and squeals of their parents frolicking overhead and feel the generation gap. Alcohol didn't have any effect on them any more than drugs, and they were intolerant of those on whom it did. Such a squalid way of freaking out, with no transcendental hook-ups to make it an enriching experience. "Do you suppose they have communal orgies or just swap?" Gherkin asked.

"Now, Sanford, don't be nasty." And Callie refused to believe it when he told her about the night he'd gone upstairs to borrow some Sucaryl and seen Dr. Rosenblum chasing Mrs. Fillmore through the hall, both stark naked and somewhat overweight, while from the

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next landing out of sight came giggles and gasps from their lither spouses. It wasn't, he supposed, the kind of thing a girl, no matter how liberally-oriented, wanted to know about her parents.

The only thing from which Calliope and Gherkin could get any kind of pleasure, morbid, of course, was reliving what they still thought had been their drug experience. And the more they interchanged ideas the more similar those ideas became until it seemed almost as if they really had visited another space, another dimension, another world. They kept saying, "Do you remember . . .?" Like old people reliving a past instead of young people whose future had hardly started. That was why they hadn't felt like doing anything about the garden. Even if you took away the weeds and planted all the shrubs dictated by the *Times'* knowledgeable garden editor, the greens, the colors, would be all wrong.

The baby was supposed to be a Christmas baby, but Christmas and New Year's and then Epiphany came and went without his putting in an appearance . . . to everyone's relief because it would have been symbolic to the point of vulgarity to have him arrive just then. "Nothing to worry about," Uncle Joe said, "sometimes the first pregnancy is delayed a little. Very often the young couple are too—uh—preoccupied to keep an accurate record of when—uh—the happy moment actually occurred. Let me see, exactly when did you two kids get spliced?"

"You know it happened before we were married," Callie said bluntly.

His beam remained fixed "Either you were mistaken or you had a miscarriage so early in the pregnancy you didn't even know it happened; then you conceived again. There was an episode with a horse, as I remember?"

How could she tell him it couldn't have happened like that because she and Gherkin hadn't had any sex together at all after they were married? Even if Uncle Joe hadn't been an in-law it made the whole thing seem so sleazy. So she kept quiet, let the horse take the blame.

Valentine's Day passed, likewise Washington's Birthday, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter. Around Mother's Day Uncle Joe finally did admit he was worried. "It's somewhat incredible," he told the family, whom he'd called in for a caucus. "I've never heard of such a prolonged pregnancy in my life. And yet the mother appears to be in excellent health." Already Calliope had become "the mother," the name under which she was to figure in all the medical journals; futile device because afterward the muck-raking press vultures splashed her real name all over

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the papers; some with pictures.

And the baby, the anxious grandparents-to-be asked. Was it, too, in excellent health?

After a pause, Uncle Joe said it was. But that was as far as he would commit himself. He had already heard eerie things in his stethoscope, and finally, even though it was currently unfashionable to expose expectant mothers to radiation, he'd X-rayed her. He took one look at the plates and called Uncle Joe the analyst for an immediate appointment. Uncle Joe the analyst did his thing but the only solace the obfuscated obstetrician derived was from the schnapps that was served afterward (not to all patients, just connections).

No, Uncle Joe the obstetrician told the family, he didn't think a Caesarean was advisable. The baby appeared to be—he shuddered—developing normally. In its own way. It's my opinion he'd seen—sensed—enough not to be anxious to meet the little bundle from heaven any sooner than he had to; and although I—you must have guessed by now that I was that aforementioned bundle—by no means had achieved cognition in even the crude terrestrial sense, still my survival instincts must have already been functioning, for a Caesarian at that time would either have killed me entirely or made me so defective I might as well have been human.

On the Fourth of July, almost fifteen months after her impregnation, Calliope was delivered of a bouncing baby thing . . . later to be called by the newspapers "The Yankee Doodle Monster." Male, yes, emphatically, but a boy only if you conceded that a boy could be covered with green down and have a tail and fangs (baby teeth which would drop out later). Anyone above the level of a primitive would have seen I was as cute as a cometoid; however, you couldn't expect my charm to get through to those clods.

The Rosenblums and the Fillmores gathered outside Calliope's hospital room (private, thank God, even if He had let them down in all else) and wept, while inside Calliope and Gherkin gazed at each other with wonder and gladness. "Golly gee, it was real," she whispered. "All of it was real. He was real."

"She was real," Gherkin murmured.

"Both shes were real," Calliope said unkindly before they freaked out on the operetta bit. Then she added (why shouldn't he be happy, too?), "I'll bet that first chick wanted to be with you on the second round, but it was against the rules. Because all the chicks had to have a chance. Which is only fair, really." She smiled down at the baby, whom she was allowed, *required* to keep with her all the time because none of the

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nurses would touch him and, seeing his father's face, murmured, "I think he's beautiful."

And Gherkin, looking down and seeing the likeness of the girl whom he loved and who might even now somewhere, some place be bearing his child (and conveniently forgetting the equal similarity to the girl whom he had not loved but who might also be spawning) vowed, "He's the groovyiest kid ever, and I'm proud to be his foster father." He and Callie looked at each other with a love whose origin was not in sex but in the sharing of a truly mind-expanding experience that linked them together more meaningfully than any physical interaction . . . thrust them up the evolutionary scale, in awareness at least, centuries before a time that might never come to pass for their self-destructive race. It was thus that I made my entrance into that world, although, since I did not spring into being with fully developed mental faculties (though aeons beyond a comparable smelly Earth infant), the rest of this tale will continue to be based on hearsay.

Calliope and Gherkin tried to tell the truth about the way it all had been, knowing it wouldn't be believed but feeling it should be put on record. Their parents were simply uncomprehending, but Uncle Joe the obstetrician was furious, yet also relieved because this was something he understood. Or thought he did. "We've warned our young people over and over again of the dangers of LSD and its ilk but they wouldn't believe us. They laughed at us when we told them of the harm these hallucinogenic horrors could wreak. Older people with their stultified brains didn't know anything, they said. Well, now that the full horror has been exposed, they'll know better, but why—" his voice broke into a wail—"why did that horror have to be born into *my* family?"

When the Rosenblums and the Fillmores got over their initial grief, shock, consternation, and everything else you might expect, they were simply livid. "If you didn't think of us at least you should have had more consideration for Bill and Lobelia. They've had to live with the color problem all their lives and now—a hairy green grandchild . . . !" Mrs. Rosenblum choked with wrath and self pity. Because not only had the newspapers made much of "Black + White = Green," but some militant segregationists of both persuasions were trying to make out that this was what often happened as the result of interracial breeding.

"I just plain don't know how we're going to live down the disgrace," Mrs. Fillmore said. "What's the point of our giving you a college education if you're only going to use it to take drugs and give birth to monsters?"

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"Exactly how I feel!" Mrs. Rosenblum wailed. "How could you have done such a thing to us? And, to top it all, talking to the media!"

"But we didn't," Gherkin insisted. "Take drugs, I mean, at least not until later. This happened on a *real* trip. We went to another . . . planet, I guess. I mean, they know now there are other worlds; scientists keep getting signals, pulsars and stuff. . . ."

"The *National Inquirer* may believe a story like that," Mrs. Rosenblum said coldly, "or pretend to because it makes good copy—I don't for a moment think they swallow it in their hearts—but you can't expect *us* to accept these mad little psychedelic fairy tales of yours. No, might as well face up to the truth and since you seem so anxious for publicity at least seek it with some idealistic purpose, like warning other young people not to follow your tragic example."

"We could form an association," Mrs. Fillmore suggested, "with seals and all. Nobody else has the Fourth of July. We'd have a clear field."

Mrs. Rosenblum hesitated, tempted, then shook her head. "It just doesn't seem right. For one thing, what would you call it?"

"The Teratology Foundation," Gherkin proposed. "Incorporated."

His mother stared right through him. "As for your offspring, whatever you plan to call him—"

"Call him Ishmael," Dr. Rosenblum suggested, was also ignored.

"We will provide for his support until Sanford has his B.A. and can assume his responsibilities as a husband and father, but—" her voice rose "—I beg of you to keep it out of my way. I refuse to consider it as any grandson of mine." With good reason, Callie thought, a little remorsefully. And she and Gherkin named the baby Milton after Gherkin's late Great-Uncle, who had expired in Acapulco in Aunt Ada's arms, because it seemed as good a name as any. Besides, they thought Uncle Milton would have dug the kid.

It was more shocking than surprising when it oozed out that both Mrs. Rosenblum and Mrs. Fillmore by a coincidence, not very strange, were also pregnant, although this was being kept very quiet because it would be embarrassing under any circumstances. "Thanks to you, Uncle Joe refuses to have anything to do with me," Mrs. Rosenblum said bitterly. "I'll have to go to someone outside the family." She blushed. Although she had frequently been unfaithful to Dr. Rosenblum (dentists keep long hours), she had never used a strange obstetrician. It seemed indecent.

"Guess what, Milton, honey," Calliope said to me as I lay in my crib, still stunned by the shock of having been born into this world,

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"you're going to have two uncles or aunts even younger than you are!" She tickled my feet. "Listen to the precious gurgle," she said as I uttered incoherent sounds of protest. "How could anyone not see how utterly adorable he is?"

How indeed! But Gherkin eyed me uneasily. Already he and I had developed areas of strong non-rapport.

"The new babies'll take their minds off us when we go," she went on. "Not that I think they'll miss us too much, probably be glad to get rid of us, especially Milton, know what I mean?"

"We never really were a part of this lousy world," Gherkin agreed. "Alienated from the start." Alienation! They didn't begin to understand the meaning of the word. "Only," he added hesitatingly, "are you sure they—the Scouts—will come back for us?"

"They'll come back for Milton because they couldn't have carried too many of us up there on fertility field trips; what's more, chances are it wouldn't take every time. So this baby's got to be important to them."

If she had realized just how important, there would have been more confidence in her voice, more apprehension in her heart.

"But how will they know he exists?"

"By reading the papers. That's why I talked you into letting me give all those interviews. Those Scouts stay on top of things. Sooner or later they're bound to get the word." Besides, she didn't tell him, she prayed every night for them to come back, so she was advertising in two different media. Surely the power of public relations couldn't be limited to one measly planet.

"But they seemed—the second girl anyway—such mandarin types. Maybe they won't want us. Maybe they'll just want the baby."

"They can't take the baby without taking me," she said, confident that her own simplistic view of the Universe obtained universally. "I'm his mother. And you're my husband. I'll *insist* they take you."

And, she thought, we can get divorced up there and marry the green people and live happily ever after because, in spite of everything, in her heart she believed in the good old American dream. "Everything's going to be groovy," she told him.

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Carse Hannock's life was a game regulated by his own cold, deliberate rules. Mostly, he played it well, making precise moves, manipulating the other players with ease . . . until one night and a lonely drive north from Los Angeles . . .

PARTY NIGHT

by R. Bretnor

ANGER NEVER MADE CARSE Hannock drive dangerously, not even now. Except occasionally on turns, when he held speed too fiercely, the fury in him showed only in his cold mastery of his car. It was a new car, wider than most, named for a famous race its make had never entered, and he drove it at a steady seventy. Seventy!—when most of the characters he knew would've been pushing ninety and a hundred, trying to work their mad out. Seventy!—after what Anne had said to him—Jesus Christ, *seventy!*

The moonlight through the windshield showed him his own hands, long, hard and competent, dictating to the wheel. Ahead stretched Highway 101, leading up over Gaviota Pass, leaving behind it Santa Barbara, and the taunting sea, and his fouled-up evening, and Anne herself. He had gone to college with her in L.A. his senior year, after he'd found his way out West. He'd dated her for several weeks—and he'd have made out, too, if Dickson hadn't come along. Herb Dickson, whom everyone called Dickie Boy. Dickie Boy! Big, slow, and sort of solemn Dickie Boy, who—my God!—played the *bagpipes.* Things had looked bright for

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Dickie Boy right then. UX Aggregates had picked him up six months before they hired Carse. Anne had married him within two weeks. Nobody'd seen he was a loser—nobody but Carse. He could tell them every time.

Carse had worked things right. Jim Teach, his chief, was nothing but a slob. But he had had a secretary, the sort of incredibly efficient woman who, only too often, devotes her life to keeping slobs in business. She was ten years Carse's senior, a little worn by waiting, but with a hell of a good figure. He'd made a play for her, not obviously, not spending too much money, and he had slept with her enough to keep her hungry. He never thought of her by name. She was a face, a body, an instrument. In two years, he'd caught up with Dickie Boy. Another two, and he'd been jumped ahead—not much, but just enough. Now his card read, *Carse Hannock, Assistant Executive Sales Engineer, Los Angeles Branch,* and Dickie Boy, after being sidetracked first to Santa Barbara, was being shunted out.

That was what made it so damned queer. Anne must've known. She must have known that once UX dropped a man, his chances, except in small time, were exactly nil. You would have thought she'd have been doing a long double take at the crumb she had latched onto, looking around for someone on the rise, for fun if not for keeps. Yet all through dinner she had seemed relaxed, had bragged about how big a jump it was for Herb to go with Kaiser, had invited Carse to come and stay with them the way he always had. Just as if the story—complete with Dickie Boy's new salary—hadn't come to him straight, or almost straight, out of the Board Room.

Then later, back at her apartment, he had made his pitch. He had only hinted at what was sure to become of Dickie Boy; he had told her how really serious he had been, and how he'd always hoped to marry her himself, and how, while he knew it was too late for that, still chances like tonight didn't often come along, and they were too precious just to chuck away, and—

She interrupted him, pushing him off. "Carse," she said, looking at him out of her dark, dark gray eyes, "are you trying to tell me that I'm supposed to let you sleep here, with *me*?" She didn't let him answer. "Is that what you've been working up to all this time? All of that sideways talk about Herb's job, that's how you operate? Carse, I'm Herb's wife. And you're supposed to be his friend."

"I'm *your* friend, Anne. That's what I've always been." He reached for her.

She stiffened. She drew back. His instinct, infallible where women were concerned, told him she

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wanted him, that she was asking for it—his strength against her scruples. He seized her by the shoulders: he pressed her back; he said whatever it was he should have said. She did not struggle. She went limp—

And suddenly, as he brought himself down over her, her lax left hand lifted the ashtray under it, and dashed butts, ashes, everything, into his eyes, his mouth, his face.

He dropped her. She straightened and stared at him, as cold as ice. Blindly, for a moment only, he raged at her.

Evenly she said, "Carse, do you want to take it from me? Do you want to try?"

Then she waited there, while he went into the bathroom and rinsed his eyes out, and his mouth, and washed himself. When he returned, she had not moved.

"I could tell you several reasons," she said finally, "why I won't sleep with you. You wouldn't understand them. They don't matter, really. But here's the reason under all of them, and you won't understand it either." She laughed abruptly, a deep and angry laugh from the remote and personal center of her being. "I will not sleep with you, Carse Hannock, because I am real—and you are not."

He hadn't taken all that in, not at the time. He had tried a few smooth-overs, making out it was all a joke, reminding her again of how close they'd been at school. She ignored all of it, watching him silently while he found his coat, put it on, brushed off his lapels, went to the closet for his hat. He didn't argue—she was too cold, too certain of herself, for that. As he left, she said nothing to him. It was only after the door had closed behind him that he heard her wounding laughter, whipping him down the hall.

Carse Hannock thought of her breasts and thighs, the way she walked, the way her eyes had once looked into his. He thought of Dickie Boy. He started hammering at the wheel with his right hand—then realized its sheer futility. As he entered the Gaviota Pass approach, a sudden cross wind caught him, flipping him almost into the other lane, and he realized with a shock that he was up to eighty, eighty-five. He braked. Only suckers pushed too fast. Deliberately, as he drove through the hills, he made himself relax, lean his left elbow on the door casually, think of what he might make out of the balance of the night.

It was a Friday night, with October almost over, cold and clear, a good night for driving, and not yet ten o'clock. Once in a while, you ran across a chick like Anne, frigid and all tied up inside with justifying it. Well, she was the first he hadn't spotted right away.

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She'd fooled him. And so what? Anytime before two a.m. he could make the grade at some bar along the road. Usually all it took to get things rolling was a nice slice of profile. He was not conceited—that was the way things were.

Carse Hannock's anger sank beneath the surface; his relaxation became more real. He turned the radio on; thought of Jim Teach's secretary; thought of how Dickie Boy would hit the skids when UX booted him; remembered how, back when he was just sixteen, his mom had caught him laying, or maybe just being laid by, the fat McCoy chippy who lived next door, and how, absurdly, she'd screamed out, "Curtis Hannock, whatever are you *doing* to that child?" What he'd been doing had been as obvious as a flagpole. Even though he'd had his tail beaten afterwards, his old man hadn't done it very hard—and later he had laughed like hell and made some crack like Ma had never showed *him* any sign of knowing what went on, and this just proved it.

Carse chuckled. Not a heavy drinker, he realized that what he needed was a drink or two to take the edge off things. He pulled in at Buellton, though the place didn't look like the hunting would be worth a damn, found a bar noisy with fights on its TV and farmhands with their girls. He belted down a couple on the rocks, ignored the coy attempts at conversation of a beefy off-duty eatery waitress, looked the situation over for maybe a half hour, decided that it stank, had another for the road, and shouldered his way out, not at all disappointed.

Los Alamos, fifteen miles on, looked more promising. He chose a bar where there seemed to be lots of action, and almost right away found himself making it with a pair of Latin girls, sisters in stretchpants, who said they were from Albuquerque but sounded more like Juarez or Tijuana. They had round, compact little bodies, and big black eyes, and too much makeup. They told him they were waiting for their boy friends, and winked and giggled at each other, and let him buy them drinks. When he asked when they expected the boy friends to show up, one of them said, "Mebbe tonight. Who knows?" and then they both went into another fit of giggling. They kidded him; he kidded them. Clarita and, of all things, Marlene. Their talk was uninhibited, provocative. They told him, "Gee, you got beeg shoulders!" and hinted that he must be quite a man in many ways, and felt his muscles, giggled, pouted, said that they'd bet he had a wife and five, seex keeds. Back and forth, more and more friendly after every round. By midnight, convinced he had it cinched and with his hand under

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the table on Clarita's firm, round thigh, he was promising himself that the two of them together would really be a deal.

Then, at a quarter after, the boy friends came. Clarita swiftly disengaged herself. Marlene, giggling, explained that their friends, on duty at the base, had often to work late. The hot blood rushed to Carse's face as he realized that he'd been taken for a short, sweet ride. He leaned a little forward, each muscle tense, waiting for what would happen next. He understood abruptly what his mind had unconsciously recorded that there was a sameness to most of the men around him in the bar, that too many of them seemed to know each other, that most of them were military. If trouble started, he'd not exactly be on friendly ground.

The boy friends crossed the room, stopping occasionally to say hello, to slap a back. They were both older men than Carse; one of them tall, leathery, taffy-haired; the other dark, with the face and frame of a Camp Pendleton drill sergeant, wearing his sports coat as if it had three rows of ribbons on it. They didn't seem surprised to see him. When the girls introduced him as "Meester Hancock. Gee, he's a nice guy—he's bought us dreenks," they didn't look as if they believed the nice guy part, but they weren't hostile. Carse didn't get the tall one's name. The other was called Valenzuela; he was a master sergeant.

Carefully, Carse disciplined his breathing. He shook their hands. The pleasure had been his, he said, lucky break in the long run to S.F. To save face, he insisted on buying one more round, for all of them. They ordered. While the drinks were coming, the girls went off together to the john.

"Sweet kids," Valenzuela said. "Known 'em since I lived back in Albuquerq'." He looked Carse over. "Clarita, she's got a real keen sense of humor, hasn't she?"

"Real keen," Carse said.

"Been in the service?" the tall one asked, after a bit.

Carse shrugged. "The usual."

Glances were exchanged; there was a silence in which the two seemed quite at ease. Presently the drinks arrived. Carse paid the tab, tipped the waitress.

The tall soldier lifted his glass. *"Salud y pesetas!"* he said, speaking like a Texan who'd learned Spanish early.

"Y amor," added Valenzuela, *"y tiempo para gustarlos."*

They grinned at each other. "Especially *tiempo,*" the Texan added. *"Poco tiempo, poco amor."*

"Cheers," Carse said.

"Speakin' of time, friend," Valenzuela remarked, "you figure to make Frisco by morning, you better get on your horse."

"I'll find a motel up around San Luis," Carse replied.

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"This time Friday night, with the troops shackin' up and the weekenders? Don't be funny."

Carse started to snap back that his class of motel didn't fill up that quickly—and thought better of it.

"Yeah, it's real late," said the Texan, looking first at his watch, then back at the restrooms.

Carse had a rule; you didn't try anything if you couldn't win. "Maybe you're right," he admitted. "Weekends, they fill up pretty fast." He killed his drink in three gulps, spacing them decently with made conversation. Then he stood up to go. "Give my love to the ladies," he said.

"I'll do that," answered Valenzuela.

As Carse left the room, somebody gave a shrill wolf-whistle and there was a loud burst of laughter.

When he got into his car he was raging.

This time, he drove faster, hurling the car into the bright shaft of its headlights, into the turns. He savaged the brakes; let the tires scream bloody murder. He wasn't seeing red really—not quite. His control was still perfect, precise. After a few miles, when the chilling air had had a chance to cool him off, he realized suddenly that his rage was not at Valenzuela or the Texan, Clarita or Marlene. They didn't mean a thing; they weren't his kind of people. But Anne—Anne was. *Their* isolation, their imperviousness were of importance only as they accentuated hers. It had been she—she—who had made a triumphant night so suddenly go sour. Again his mind confronted her, cold and invulnerable behind the wall of her stupidity.

Carse's knuckles were white against the wheel. The radio blared, and he didn't hear it. The car, softly sprung, lurched and plunged in its efforts to obey him.

He stopped once, at a packed roadhouse, had one drink. Nothing had changed. There were two or three probable pickups, but they were pigs, real pigs.

He stopped at Santa Maria, at a bar-restaurant with lots of class, and nothing happened except that some swish character made a play for him.

He gassed up, bought himself a bottle at a package store, and hit the road again. He wasn't driving well now, and didn't give a damn. Under his anger and frustration, he began to feel the fatigue they had engendered. After four or five miles, he thought, "Oh, the hell with it! I need a good night's sleep." He'd find some place, take a hot shower, down enough bourbon to put him out, forget the mess.

He started looking for a motel. Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Pismo Beach all went by. The Texan had

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been right; there were no vacancies. Sometimes neon signs taunted him; sometimes darkness. He knew that most likely at Pismo, where there were auto courts dating back to World War I, he could've found some kind of pad, but that was not what he was looking for. Now, as he turned inland towards San Luis Obispo, stretches of fog began to slow him down, and he became aware of the fact that he was drunk, not quite enough to foul up his reactions—they always were okay—but just enough to fuzz his thinking up a little bit.

He spent twenty minutes cruising San Luis; everywhere *No Vacancy* stared him in the face. It began to get to him, and again driving fast, he tore off for Atascadero. The fog thickened as he went up over Questa Pass. He took it as a challenge, riding the white line, trusting his road-sense, his disciplined and keenly tuned reflexes.

So, when it happened, he was braced for it. Abruptly, where there had been only the white line, he saw the big end of a wrecked trailer rig across the highway, yards of smashed crates and cartons, a State Highway Patrolman trying to light a flare—

He never could have stopped. It was too fast for consciousness.

There was a lightless flash of utter emptiness, a maelstrom of infinity, without duration, without beginning, without end, with neither sight nor sound nor self-awareness—

When he came to, he couldn't quite remember it—but it was there, something unseen, something behind his back. He was far down the road—how far, he didn't know and didn't care. He had blanked out, he told himself. His subconscious must have taken over, swerving the heavy car out on the gravel shoulder, wrestling it against its own mass and momentum with a skill no ordinary driver could have matched.

He shrugged off the uneasiness. Suddenly he felt sober. Suddenly, he no longer faced a hard, blank wall. His bitterness and fury were still with him, but this time he had won, and now they seemed less terrible enemies. Even his car responded to his victory. It no longer fought him. It no longer fought the road. Silently, it shared his power. Again, he and his car were one.

And the fog was gone. The full moon rode the sky, and he drove in its bright, fearful clarity.

At Atascadero, once again, no accommodations were available. One after another, the signs told him so. Finally, however, he found a nice, expensive, new motel, one with a heated pool and everything, where the sign said *Vacancy*. He coasted in, stopped by the office door, got out, and rang the bell. At least he pushed the button,

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hard, time after time. And nothing happened. There was no sound, and no one answered him. He thought of shouting, of kicking the damned door—and then, recalling that Atascadero had a hospital for the criminally insane, decided not to. Somebody might be trigger-happy, or something might already have gone wrong and he'd be into it. Suppose some nitwit cop decided he was high? Publicity like that he didn't need.

He hesitated, wondering just what to do—and as he stood there a girl in well-filled slacks opened a door three units down the line and, keys in hand, stepped out to her car.

"Hi!" he called out.

She started to look back over her shoulder, shook her head a little, ignored him.

"Hi!" he repeated. "How do you shake these people out? Hell, I've been ringing fifteen minutes."

She opened the car trunk, took out a flight bag, locked the trunk again. Still ignoring him, she went back to her door. It closed behind her.

"Okay, so mama said don't talk to strange young men," he muttered after her. "You silly bitch!"

He gave it up. Almost without thinking, he turned back down 101, aiming for Pismo, where he knew he could at least sack in. He thought of Anne, went over all of it again. He tried to plan what he would do tomorrow, when he reached S.F., but found he couldn't concentrate. The car seemed practically to drive itself, demanding almost none of his attention; the ride was over with the swift timelessness of thought.

He left the highway. He could hear the soft, gigantic sighing of the sea. It was nearly three o'clock. The town slept. And all the best motels, of course, were full. He didn't care; he was too tired for that. He tried the side streets—found nothing, even there. At last, almost despairing, he saw a crudely painted sign, pointing toward a narrow lane. It said, LOVE'S COTTAGES.

"*Just* what I need," he thought, and turned into the lane. It was a dead-end alley, and Love's Cottages lay athwart the end. There were ten or a dozen of them, built out on weed-grown sand. Each was square; each had a phoney mission-style false front of vile pink stucco, faded and flaking; each was connected to its neighbor by an arch carrying the false promise of a carport. Another painted sign said *Vacancy*; it looked as though it never had been taken down. The place was even worse than he'd expected.

This time, when he pushed the button, he heard a ringing, thin and far away. He rang three times, then realized a light was on inside. Footsteps shuffled; the door opened on a chain.

"I see you've got a vacancy,"

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Carse said. He took his billfold out; you didn't pay by credit card, not here.

The door swung wide. He saw a wisp of an old woman with thin lips and eyes like dull black beads, wearing a man's old overcoat over her flannel nightgown.

"You can have Number 3, dearie," she whispered to him hoarsely. "That's this one next to mine." He saw her peering at the car. "That'll be eight dollars, single."

He knew that it was twice what she got usually and that she knew he had no choice. He paid her without protest, signed a cold, moist registration card, received his key.

He said goodnight to her, and she, sounding as though she suffered from some desperate illness of the throat, called after him, "You'll sleep real good, Mister. We always sleep real good down here."

Carse unlocked his door, snapped on the light. It was like the outside, only more so. The cracked ceiling fixture showed everything in all its dinginess, the bed as well worn as a wrestling mat, the obsolete TV, a nineteen-twentyish cheap print that looked like maybe it was made to illustrate *Three Weeks,* a tacked-up calender of dogs. He switched on the bedside table light, and turned the other off. Things didn't look much better.

There was a gas heater. He tried to light it, but it wouldn't work. He brought his bag and bottle in, sat down on the bed, and poured a slug into his own plastic cup. While he drank it, he looked through the bedside table drawer. It held a Gideon Bible, the Book of Mormon, half a dozen used-up girlie magazines, a horror comic book, an empty condom can. He poured himself another drink, and started to undress, thinking of the shower, hoping to God there'd be hot water. He went into the bathroom; at least there *was* a shower. A rubber hose attached it to the faucet of the cracked, stained tub.

Naked, he stood beside the bed, drinking, letting his tiredness persuade him that messing with the shower would be a waste of time.

There was a knocking at the door.

"Oh, for Christ's *sake!*" Carse muttered. "Now what?"

The knocking came again, and he heard the manager's ruined voice asking him if he was yet asleep. Suddenly, the idea hit him that maybe she had come to fix the heater. He called out, "Just a minute," put his bathrobe on and went to the door, drink in hand.

She stood there with another woman, a woman somewhere in her middle years, fat, pendulous, smeared with lipstick, powder, rouge, and clad in a flowered wrapper as old as she, with just a tragic hint about her that once, somewhere, she had been young,

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and, unbelievably, perhaps attractive.

"This here's Mimmy," said the manager. "She's a friend of mine."

"I spell it like it sounds," Mimmy put in, "not Frenchy-like." Coyly she smirked. "My ma named me. Mimosa. That's what it's short for. We got a party goin', and Bobsie said how you was so good-lookin'. We figured maybe you'd sort of like to come."

Carse ignored her. He was about ready to blow his stack. At the manager he snarled, "Look, Lady Love, I'm on my way to bed. Don't pester me again."

They snickered; they nudged each other. "Lady *Love*," crowed Mimmy. "Oh, my fat tail—*Lady Love*. She ain't Mrs. Love, hon. She's Mrs. Prewitt."

"Love sold out here twenty years back," giggled the manager. "I left the name because it sounded good. *You* know."

Carse wasted no more words. He grasped the door to bang it shut.

And at that point he saw the girl.

She was behind them, half in shadow. His own light showed her oval face. A fainter light from another cabin outlined her figure. Carse understood her at a glance. Her eyes were huge, her lashes long. Her mouth was full and brooding; her glance at once a promise, a caress, an aphrodisiac, and a surrender. He felt the passion in her—and he felt, too, her utter vulnerability. Here were no walls. Here was no cold imperviousness. Here was a person who could be hurt and hurt again, and finally broken. Here was his late reward, the cure for what ailed him. All his exhaustion left him. He knew he had to have her, and he knew as well that he would have to proceed very, very carefully.

He stared at her, his eyes taking in the fact that there were several other people there, but not quite understanding it. Shyly, she smiled at him.

"That's Laura—" Mimmy's voice reached him, suggestive, insinuating. "You'll *like* her."

Carse threw the door open. "Come on in," he ordered. "We'll have the party here."

They entered, calling back to others, and there were more of them than he had guessed, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. He wasn't sure; it didn't matter anyway. Some, Mrs. Bobsie Prewitt introduced; some shook his hand and introduced themselves. They crowded in, bringing their own bottles. Some brought in chairs. Some sat around his bed, some on it. Some leaned against the wall. Laura, passing with lowered lids, seated herself on the dressing table bench. She had a pint of brandy; from time to time she drank from it.

Carse had wondered what kind

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of people patronized that sort of dump. Now he learned. There were some who looked as if they'd bought their clothes out of Salvation Army salvage shops. There were one or two who seemed to have been trapped, like him, by lateness and no-vacancies. There were those in between. He met a sailor, hairy and big bellied, in rumpled whites with three stripes and hash-marks showing fifteen years of service; he kept wandering round and coming back to Carse to tell him about ports he'd helled around in, and his VD, and how a baker in the Navy couldn't make a quarter what he could outside. He met an old man with a wrinkled skin loose enough to hold two of him; he wore a crazy Herbert Hoover suit and whined interminably about how rough life was for a travelling man in notions, findings, and suchlike. Lately the railroad fares had forced him to start driving; cackling evilly, he recalled the pushovers he'd met in Pullman cars.

There were the others. A blocky, short-haired, brutal woman and her flaccid girl friend. A small, dark man who sat all by himself, drank cheap sweet wine, kept looking at the pictures in his billfold, and wept. A tall, handsome, obviously expensive couple, whose hatred for each other burned in their eyes. And several more with no distinct identity. Most of them were grotesque. None of them meant anything to Carse. They were around, and they were in the way, and for a little while they'd have to be endured. Somehow, they kept getting between him and Laura, cornering him to tell their troubles, or stale dirty jokes, or stinking little bits of gossip or braggadocio. He let it all go in one ear and out the other. Laura was wearing a sleeveless green dress, cut very low. Under it, her body promised infinite warmth, infinite pliancy. He stared, ravishing her with his eyes. Occasionally, she glanced towards him, always indirectly, and very faintly smiled.

Slowly the endless minutes wore away. Mechanically, Carse drank his tasteless liquor, watching her, his hunger for her eating into him. Mimmy was making a nuisance of herself, being drunkenly affectionate, rubbing against him, trying to get into his lap; not wanting to upset the applecart, once in a while he'd sort of slap her off, like a mosquito. And Laura sat in front of him, head slightly bowed, heavy hair shading her smooth brow, and drank from her pint flask. Two or three times, one or another of the men went over and made a halfway pass at her, and on each occasion she made no response, none whatsoever.

Time dragged. His hunger mounted. Finally, conquering his contempt, he grabbed at Mimmy, pulled her close to him, pinched

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her behind and whispered to her, "For God's sake, doll, get these kooks *out* of here!" She cuddled closer in, and whispered back, "Honey, you sure do want a little piece of that! You oughta seen *me* when I was her age. Next to me you woulda thought she was a altar boy. Well, I do kinda like you, honeybun. Seeing it's party night, Mimmy'll get your decks swabbed down for you."

In a few more minutes, quietly, to his surprise the room began to clear. One by one, two by two, they drifted out, some bidding him goodnight. Finally, only he and Laura, the sailor, Mimmy, and the small, dark man remained. The sailor was looking at the dark man's pictures, cajoling him, slapping him on the back.

Carse rose. Laura smiled again. Following her smile, he walked across to her. He didn't say a word; no word was necessary. He sat down next to her, his hip against hers. His arm went round her. His right hand touched her breast, continued down so that it rested in the valley between her belly and her thighs.

She dropped her flask. It fell down to the floor. He felt the shudder that went through her and knew that he could have her—

As though responding to his hunger, slowly, very slowly, she turned around. At last, eyes wide, she looked him fully in the face.

"It's almost over," she told him in a small, low voice. "Tomorrow I'll go home." And softly, silently, the tears streamed down from her unseeing eyes.

Carse knew that he could have her anytime. But now he knew that he had come too late. Her passion has been raped, her dreadful vulnerability already violated —irrevocably. That which he needed was no longer there.

A single burst of fury brought him to his feet. Then it had passed. Coldly, he looked at them. "Beat it," he said. "I got to take a crap."

It was not true, but he turned his back on them and went into the john. He sat there for ten minutes, for fifteen, finishing his drink, while his fatigue returned a hundredfold.

When he put his glass down on the basin and walked in again, he found them gone. He threw his bathrobe off and sat down on the bed. Abruptly, almost at his feet, he saw the brandy flask. It had no labels on it. It had no cap. It was a quarter full of water, with a little sand, and a thin rag of seaweed hung from its empty mouth.

He stared at it, and felt cold horror stir. He closed his eyes. Instantly, the image of the broken trailer appeared before him, just as it had before his blacking out. And with it came a nightmare suspicion—so hideous that he rose almost to his feet, gasped, forced his eyes wide open.

There was no bottle there.

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"Satirical science fiction... it is not merely fantasy, or fantascience, but seems always to hint at some comment on the contemporary human scene." *–Christian Science Monitor*

COSMICOMICS

Italo Calvino

Translated by William Weaver

A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book

$3.95 HARCOURT, BRACE & WORLD

Carse stood before the mirror, letting the sight of his own splendid body drive the thought away, telling himself that he had drunk too much—that what he'd had was more than twice enough to drop an average man; no wonder he was seeing things. He turned the covers back, snapped off the light, crept in between the worn and mildewed sheets.

A moment later, he heard a creaking door.

He made his head turn round.

"Peekaboo!" Mimmy called. She came out from the closet, onto the bedside rug. "I hid," she giggled. "I had been watching you. Honeybun, you sure are plenty of man—" He heard the terrible hunger in her voice. "—and little Mimmy can use *lots* of that."

She stood there in the moonlight. She let her wrapper fall. She stood there, clothed only in her cerements of sagging, puffy flesh. She got into the bed.

Carse Hannock could not move.

She pressed herself against him. "Last guy I come here with," she whispered, "was Jake. You don't know Jake? He was a dirty bastard, hon." Her arms entwined him "He strangled me," she panted in his ear. *You wouldn't do that, would you, lover boy?"*

And it was then the dark, dark night closed down on him.

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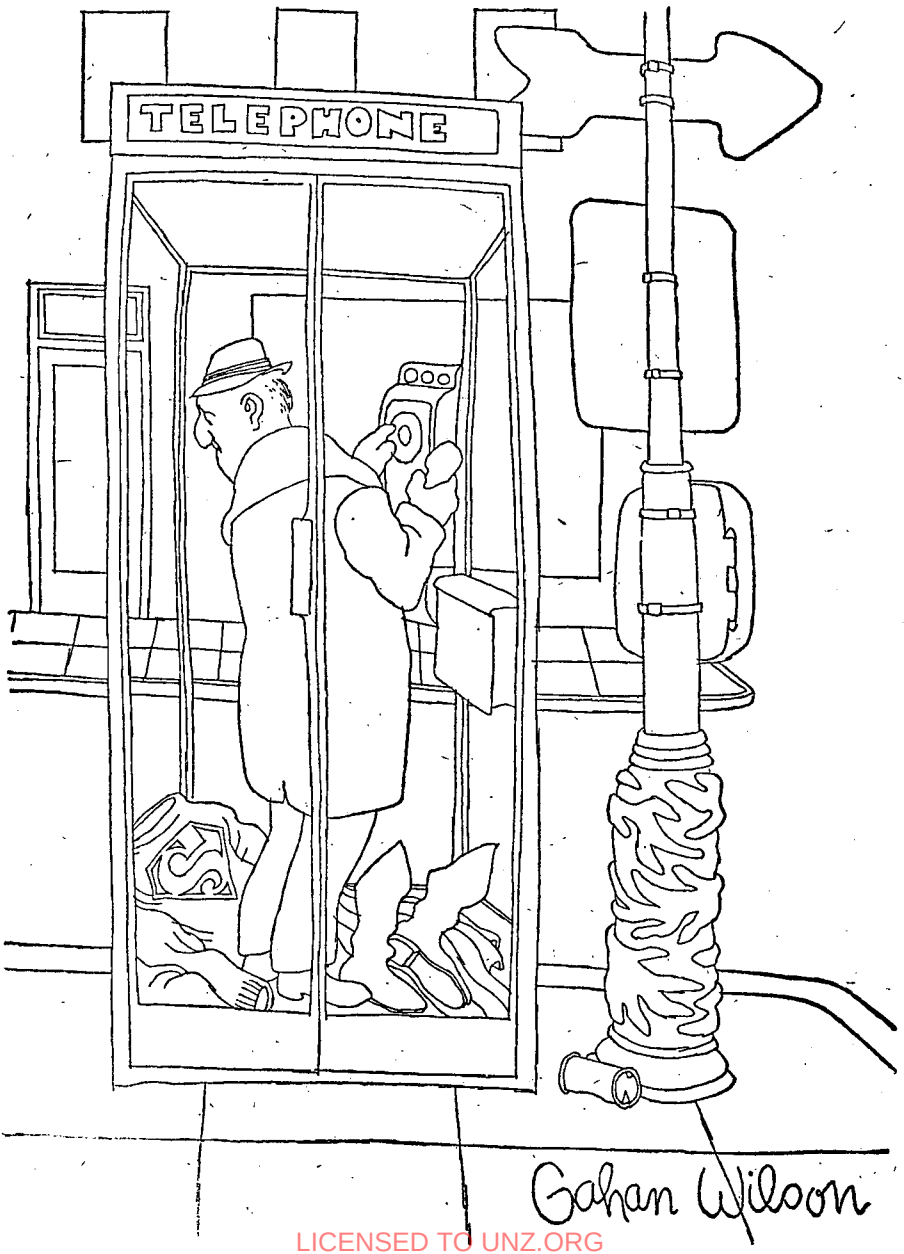

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Philip Latham is a pseudonym for a well-known astronomer, but his latest story does not concern inter-planetary or stellar travel. Instead, it is about a voyage into an indefinite dimension called N-space, the overwhelming terror attendant to such a trip, and the search for a perfect candidate for N-fear.

AFTER ENFER

by Philip Latham

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY WERE naturally the busiest days at the Colfax Museum, but since to Samuel Baxter one day was pretty much the same as another, the fact that his time-off usually came during the week didn't bother him at all. Actually he rather enjoyed rising late and loafing around the apartment when other men had to be up and hard at work at the old job. But it bothered Mrs. Baxter tremendously. Nothing annoys a woman quite so much as to be bent over the kitchen sink while her husband is taking his ease by the TV set with a can of beer. It is doubtful if she would have minded particularly if Sam did his loafing when other men were doing their loafing. But to be sitting around doing nothing on a Monday or a Thursday . . No!

It was probably more than mere coincidence, therefore, that Emily Baxter invariably had to vacuum the living room just as a ball game was getting under way or the opening gong was sounding for a prize fight. In Emily's behalf it should be said that Sam was not the easiest man in the world to get along with. Thus, one Tuesday morning when Emily insisted that he help her turn the mattress on their bed, the resulting clash was inevitable.

"That mattress feels perfectly comfortable to me. Let it go," Sam told her.

"No, I won't let it go," she retorted.

"It's beyond my comprehension why an apartment as small as ours needs so infernally much cleaning anyhow."

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"If you're so dead set against helping around the house why don't you do something outside then?"

"Like what, for instance?"

"Like looking for a better job. You've been stuck in that House of Death for sixteen years now."

It was a sore point between them. Sam slammed down his coffee cup.

"Emily, I have no special talent or training. You knew that when you married me."

"You haven't got a raise since they promoted you to Dinosaurs and Other Reptiles five years ago."

"Well, do you think I like it?" he cried. "D'you think I like standing guard over a bunch of stuffed alligators all day long? Answering the same dumb questions? Working year after year for the same damn miserable little salary?"

"Then get a decent job."

"But, Emily, at fifty that's impossible."

"How d'you know? You've never tried."

Sam did not reply. He rose, gathered up the morning paper, and began getting into his coat. His wife eyed him suspiciously.

"What are you up to now?" she said.

"I'm going out to look for another job."

"Better take your umbrella. It's beginning to rain."

"To hell with the rain."

She watched his preparations with tolerant amusement.

"While you're prowling around looking for another job," she remarked casually, "you might look for another apartment, too."

"Look for another apart—"

If his wife had requested immediate delivery of the beacon light on top of the city hall, he could not have been more astonished.

He slammed the door and stamped out.

The Baxters occupied a bedroom, kitchen and bath on the twentieth floor of an apartment house within a few blocks of the Colfax Museum. Sixteen years ago they had considered themselves extremely fortunate to have found a place within walking distance of Sam's work. Naturally they didn't intend to live in such cramped quarters for long: only until they were "settled." The insidious danger about this process is that once settled it is apt to be so hard to get unsettled. Thus after sixteen years they were still living in the same tiny apartment. Once their windows had commanded a view clear to the mountains on the north. Now they were so hemmed in by taller buildings that often it was necessary to keep the lights burning all day.

Sam squeezed into a coffee shop nearby where he could scan the columns headed *Jobs of Inter-*

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est—Male. (Long ago all the parks had been requisitioned for commercial structures.) There was no lack of such jobs. Unfortunately there were none that held the slightest interest for a male named Samuel Baxter. He hadn't the faintest interest in the fact that the Foley Tool Works needed an experienced honing machine operator. Neither was he stirred by the possibility of making $50,000 a year as a closer for a Collapsible Indoor Swimming Pool company. Numerous jobs of enormous earning potential were available to snappy young men to handle items that practically sold on sight. But as his coffee grew colder, and the mist outside thickened, he could feel the snap draining out of him minute by minute.

He was on the point of paying his bill and wandering off somewhere when his eye was attracted to the small section headed *Jobs—Men and Women.*

"Wanted for work of specialized nature. No prev. exper. nec. No age limit. No selling. Phy. exam. req. Good pay if qualify. Apply in person. Dr. Sherwood. Rm. 515 Hartford. 3855 E. Willow Wood, Glendora."

3855 E. Willow Wood . . . 3855 E. Willow Wood . . . He was sure he knew that address. Of course! It was the State University. "Hartford" must refer to the hospital building on the campus. How often had he seen that address on an envelope when pigeonholing the mail. The museum maintained an active correspondence with the professors at State. Now why in the world would the State University be running an ad like that? Well . . . it was easy to find out. Take a bus out there and ask them.

The State University at Glendora covered an area about the same size as the principality of Monaco. The regents had selected a lovely site, set amid rolling hills, with here and there a residence of the better class. On the campus the buildings had been set wide apart, leaving ample space between for benches and balustrades, where one could study or engage in leisurly chats between classes.

Such useless accessories to the pursuit of knowledge were not even a memory to the present generation of students. The state had seized upon every square millimeter of space for an educational edifice of some sort, leaving mere alleyways between. Even these were rapidly being replaced by underground passages linking the complex of laboratories and classrooms far below street level.

One of the good features about condensed structural design was that it compelled the university to replace the old room numbers by a new coordinate system devised by the department of mathematics. Thus Sam was able to locate

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Room 515 in the Hartford Hospital Building after a search of scarcely twenty minutes. In the course of his ramblings, he had traversed halls so narrow it was often difficult to find walking space between the rows of patients jammed into the benches along the wall. He found the sight of these ailing people with their pinched, anxious faces distinctly stimulating. At least there was nothing physically wrong with him, so far as he was aware.

Room 515 was in the less congested district apparently devoted to those hard-to-classify conditions that afflict the human race. There were no signs "Department of Something" with arrows pointing into space. No patients cluttered the corridor. Only a door bearing the words EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE with the invitation below in small letters "Walk In." Sam walked in.

A clever architect, by shaping the room like a narrow section cut from a cheese, had succeeded in inserting an office in a space where no office was supposed to be. A Negro girl at the wide end was searching through some cards in a filing cabinet. Unlike all the other employees he had encountered, there seemed to be no desperate rush about her job.

"I came about the ad in the *Times* this morning," Sam said.

She smiled pleasantly.

"Please sit down. Dr. Sherwood will see you in a moment."

Sam gazed around the little room hoping to find some clue to the nature of the office. On the opposite wall was a chart of the Periodic Table of the Elements beside a faded color photograph of Waikiki Beach with Diamond Head in the background. Behind him was a panel consisting of oval portraits of the Waterfall Whisker School of American poets, Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, et al. Longfellow appeared to be gazing in the general direction of a lithesome young female on a calendar from the Superba Laundry. The closed door beside the filing cabinet presumably led to the doctor's office.

It was Sam's bitter experience that "in a moment" really meant more like thirty minutes. It was scarcely five minutes, however, before the door opened and a husky young fellow emerged followed by a genial looking middle-aged man in a white coat, evidently the doctor.

"Well, anyhow, thanks for coming in," the doctor said, as they shook hands.

The young fellow nodded and hurried out. For a few seconds doctor and secretary stood gazing blankly at each other.

"There's a gentleman to see you," the secretary said presently, indicating Sam Baxter. The doctor regarded him gloomily.

"Come in," he sighed.

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After they had introduced themselves and shaken hands, the doctor leaned back in his swivel chair with his hands clasped behind his head, gazing at the ceiling. Sam tried to appear at ease without being too nonchalant about it. He knew that if this job was any good at all, he intended to have it. He knew, also, that the worst time to apply for a new job was when you needed it very badly. He must not seem overeager or abjectly meek either.

"I suppose you came in answer to our advertisement?" Dr. Sherwood said finally.

"That's right," Sam replied.

The doctor smiled reminiscently.

"I remember when I was a kid starting out to look for my first job, my father told me, 'Never answer a blind ad.'"

"Sounds like good advice."

"Would you mind telling me why you answered ours?"

Sam shifted position slightly.

"Well, frankly, it was the only one that sounded as if there might be some hope in it for me. Also, I recognized the address as that of the State University. I knew that State wouldn't be offering anything crazy."

"Wouldn't be too sure about that," Dr. Sherwood rumbled. "They can do some of the damndest things—" He shook his head. "What is your present situation, Mr. Baxter?"

Sam briefly sketched his position at the Colfax Museum, his dissatisfaction with the work there, and the difficulty of finding something better at his age. The doctor heard him through without comment.

"Well, Mr. Baxter, yours is an all-too-familiar story, I'm afraid," he said, not unkindly. "Whether we can help you or not, I don't know. Probably not. You see, we're not offering any form of regular employment. Our aim is to find some man—or woman—who will prove suitable for what we call for lack of a better term a 'procedure.' Whether you would prove suitable or not, I haven't the slightest notion."

"What is the nature of this . . . procedure?"

"Sorry, but I can't tell you," Dr. Sherwood said. "My lips are sealed. Dammit! How I hate all this hush-hush and top-secret stuff. But, hell, what can I do? Unless I agree to everything, I can't do anything. So, if you wish to go ahead, Mr. Baxter, I'm afraid it'll have to be pretty much in the dark."

"In case I should prove suitable . . . what would the pay be?"

Sam had already braced himself to ask for at least ten percent more than he received at Colfax. He was caught quite unawares, therefore, when the doctor named a figure more than twice his present salary.

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"Rate's fixed by the government," Dr. Sherwood said. "Job's worth a lot more in my opinion."

"I should say the pay is extremely generous for anyone without previous experience."

"Maybe you won't think so when I tell you more about it. If you wish to go ahead, here's the layout:

"First you fill out the usual long questionnaire. 'Any children?' 'Ever been married?' 'What's your grandmother's maiden name?' Not that we really give a damn, but we got started asking that stuff and we're afraid to stop now. Then we give you a preliminary physical exam, just to make sure your heart's beating, bowel's functioning, and your reflexes still on the job. We also do a little private snooping into your personal life. If you get by this preliminary routine, then we give you a *real* physical—the works."

"But doesn't all this take considerable time?"

"I was coming to that," Dr. Sherwood said. "We will pay you three dollars for every hour you spend in our clinic. The examination, of course, is entirely on us. I think I can safely say that at the present modest price of medical care, the kind of examination you'll get would probably set you back around a thousand, easy. If you can manage the time, Mr. Baxter, it's really a can't-lose proposition. Think it over."

Sam thought it over for about ten seconds.

"I'll take it," he declared.

"Good." Dr. Sherwood heaved himself to his feet. "When d'you want to begin?"

"Today. Right now."

The doctor consulted his watch.

"Not twelve yet. I'll have Miss Christie see if she can't arrange an appointment for early this afternoon. You could have lunch in our cafeteria, then check with her later."

"Fine."

Sam turned to go but the doctor had one more question.

"Mr. Baxter, you wouldn't happen to be an acrophobe, would you?"

"Acrophobe?"

"Guy who's abnormally afraid of high places."

"No, guess not."

"Ever been isolated in some high place?"

Sam tried to remember.

"I was up in a captive balloon at the Pomona Fair once."

"How'd you feel?"

"Kind of queasy."

Dr. Sherwood grinned.

"Don't blame you." He opened the door, indicating the interview was over. "Be sure to check with Miss Christie after lunch, won't you?"

Sam had no trouble meeting his numerous appointments at the hospital. The employees at the

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museum were used to trading around on the weekly schedule, and Sam, as the most faithful member of the staff, had practically everybody owing him time. Now he took full advantage of the fact. In fact, he took more days off scattered through the next two months than he had taken altogether in the last ten years.

Gradually he became a familiar figure at the Hartford Hospital, circulating around the building from Radiology at the bottom level to Pulmonary Ventilation at the top, with stops in between for Cardiology, Urology, Neuropathology, and Otology, the latter being a frequent resting place. (For some reason they were especially interested in his auricular equipment.) Whatever he was told to do, regardless of how undignified or embarrassing it might be, he did it to the best of his ability without protest or comment. If a nurse complimented him upon being a good patient, he thanked her, got back into his pants, and went on to his next appointment. And he never complained about having to wait.

Came the day when all his examinations and tests were completed; all the results duly processed and tabulated. Miss Christie had phoned him at his home to inquire if it would be convenient for Mr. Baxter to see Dr. Sherwood next morning at ten. Mr. Baxter assured her that it would.

It was Emily's good fortune to have taken the call. This had been a source of intense gratification to her, as it was her first sure clue to Sam's mysterious activities since that rainy morning two months ago. At first she had regarded his absences from home and office as mere harmless exhibitionism, another one of his futile bids for sympathy. But this time he seemed programmed on a different plan. Other wives would have suspected their husband of consorting with some woman, but such an hypothesis was obviously ridiculous in Sam's case.

To all his wife's questions Sam had maintained an impassive silence. Somewhere in those two months he had discovered the peculiar power that exists in Not Saying. "The answer will be forthcoming in due time," was his only response. Eventually it earned him a certain grudging respect.

Sam arrived at Dr. Sherwood's office a few minutes before ten and was shown in immediately. The doctor gave him a hearty handshake.

"Mr. Baxter, let me be the first to congratulate you on being such a fine physical specimen. You are one man in ten thousand."

"Thank you," Sam murmured. How different from his first interview, he thought.

"I've been through the mill myself," Dr. Sherwood went on. "Af-

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ter all that probing and testing with all those instruments of torture, you feel they'll surely find something wrong with you somewhere. And usually they do. In your case, I'm happy to say, our medical staff exerted itself in vain."

Sam acknowledged this tribute to the stainless state of his interior with a modest inclination of the head.

"Naturally you've been wondering about the purpose of all this searching physical scrutiny."

"I must confess to being a bit curious," Sam admitted.

"Now it can be told," Dr. Sherwood said, "but to make it clear I've got to start back a ways."

He hesitated briefly as if marshalling his thoughts.

"Anybody who lives in a large city today knows how crowded we are for space. We pay exorbitant rent for a little hole our grandparents wouldn't have used for a doghouse. Every square inch of space on the ground is occupied. To get more space we've been forced to reach higher. We've had to put up buildings a hundred . . . hundred and fifty . . . two hundred stories high. Recently we've been going down. But there's a limit in either direction. And now I'm afraid we've just about reached that limit."

Dr. Sherwood took his pen and began doodling across his memo pad.

"Let's say there's an urgent reason for erecting a building enclosing one hundred million cubic feet of space. We have available an area of fifty thousand square feet. The building code limits us to a vertical dimension of a thousand feet. On such an area a building a thousand feet high would give us fifty million cubic feet, which is only half the amount of space we need. Now, Mr. Baxter, what are we going to do?"

"Requisition some more land," Sam suggested.

"Sorry. That's all the land there is."

"Relax the building code?"

"Nope. No can do."

"In that case then I don't see how you can build your building," Sam declared.

"You *can* build your building if you can extend it two feet in some other dimension."

"You mean extend it a couple of feet in the fourth dimension?"

"Call it the fourth . . . fifth . . . any dimension you please."

Sam's gaze shifted a little. "Given enough dimensions I guess you could have any size building you want."

"In theory, yes," Dr. Sherwood agreed. "In practice . . . it's not so easy.

"About five years ago some of the boys over in Physics began pushing for a crash dimensional program. It sounded crazy to me and I opposed it. Naturally no-

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body paid any attention. They went right ahead, asked for a lot of money, and I'll be darned if they didn't get it. So they set out to relieve the space shortage.

"Wasn't long till most of their money was gone with nothing to show for it either—just like I'd predicted," Dr. Sherwood added, with considerable satisfaction. "As so often happens in science, the first real clue came from an entirely unexpected source. Not from that bunch of junk in the physics lab but from deviations in the orbits of Mercury and Icarus arising from the quadruple moment of the sun. Once we'd got the essential clue, the rest was fairly straight sailing. For more'n a year now we've not only known how to transfer a man into another dimension but also how to get him back out of it again."

Dr. Sherwood took two large sheets of film from an envelope and attached them to the viewing screen on his desk.

"Take a look at these," he said, flipping on the light behind. "They're negatives, of course, but it doesn't make much difference. The positives look just as bad. This one on the left you'll recognize as the corner out there where you catch the bus. It's a straight photo, shot in the regular way. The other's the same identical scene only shot in multi-dimension. Would you guess it?"

"Never in the world."

"Trying to interpret this multi-dimension stuff wouldn't be so tough if we could be sure we were getting just a single extra dimension. That was what threw us for so long. We're getting *mostly* fourth. But see this patchwork of dots and lines here in the corner? That's from fifth. And notice these shadowy masses here and there. Those are intrusions from sixth. Recently they claim they're even getting traces from seventh. Quite a mess."

"Sure is," Sam agreed.

"Transfer into this dimensional jungle and recovery turned out to be about as hard as getting a man to the moon and back. But those purely transfer problems are pretty well licked now. We could start building anytime. There's only one thing holding us back."

"Oh?"

"Fear. Paralyzing fear."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Sam said.

"No, Mr. Baxter, I wouldn't expect you would. It certainly wasn't anything we anticipated either."

Dr. Sherwood spent a while studying the photos before resuming.

"We think of ourselves as creatures whose natural habitat is space of three dimensions. But that's not true. It's only about eighty-five percent true. Actually we're creatures whose natural habitat is space of *two* dimensions—flatland. Nobody would hesitate to

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walk across this room on a board a foot wide a foot above the floor. But put that board between two buildings a thousand feet high and how many would walk across it? You couldn't get 'em out there with a red-hot pitchfork."

"But *some* people—"

"*Some* people would," Dr. Sherwood said, nodding emphatically. "For a very few people the third dimension holds no terrors whatever. Walking the plank between two tall buildings would be almost too easy.

"When we first learned the trick, everybody was crazy to see how things looked in multi-dimension. Reminded me of a lot of kids trying to peek inside a circus. Well . . . about a dozen made the trip." He smiled grimly. "None of 'em lingered very long, although there was considerable variation. Stop-over time ranged from about two seconds to twenty seconds. Never saw guys so petrified before. There was a professor from Humanities they had to keep under sedation for a week.

"For a while it looked like the program was stalled completely. Then somebody got this bright idea. Maybe people with no fear of great heights, like structural-steel workers and parachutists, wouldn't have any enfer either—"

"Enfer?"

"Sorry. Our slang term for N-fear," Dr. Sherwood explained. "You see, when we found our photos showed several dimensions, we quit talking about space of four dimensions, five, six, and so on, and lumped 'em all into 'N-space.' Same way, we began referring to this terrible fear of N-space as 'N-fear'."

He chuckled.

"We'd called in this big mathematician from Belgium as consultant. Couldn't speak English very well. When he heard us talking about N-fear, he thought we meant *enfer*—French for *hell*. After we got it straightened out, we decided N-fear *is* hell. So it's been enfer ever since."

The doctor took out his handkerchief and began polishing his glasses. Without his glasses his eyes looked old and tired.

"Well, I'll say this for them. These crazy devils who make a dozen or so parachute jumps a week were quite an improvement all right. Some of 'em stuck it in enfer for as long as twelve minutes. There was none that had to be hospitalized afterward. But there was none that showed any enthusiasm about making a career of enfer either. So finally we gave up on them too.

"As I said, we found people differed considerably in their reaction to enfer. So we started running that ad hoping we might pick up a good candidate. To date we haven't had much luck."

He replaced his glasses and gazed inquiringly at Sam.

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"Well, Mr. Baxter, that's about it. Any questions?"

"Can't think of any."

"I take it then you still wish to go ahead?"

"Very much."

"You wouldn't like to go home and sleep on it first?"

"No . . . no."

"Let me emphasize the seriousness of the decision you have made. In enfer you will be exposed not only to severe physical injury but possibly to severe psychic trauma, also. You understand that?"

"I understand perfectly."

"You must believe me, Mr. Baxter, when I tell you that I have interviewed men and women far better prepared by previous training and experience for enfer than yourself. I have seen them before enfer eager and confident. I have also seen them *after* enfer, their nerve completely shattered." He hesitated. "And something else I haven't told you."

"Yes?"

"*After* enfer—in one case—the candidate never returned."

For several seconds the little room was very still except for the faint hum of the air-conditioning.

"You are still quite as determined as ever?" Dr. Sherwood inquired.

"Quite."

Dr. Sherwood's manner suddenly changed from medical counselor to business administrator.

"Still a few loose ends to tie up. Sign a release. Then have a talk with Dr. Cameron down the hall. He'll want to ask you a few questions."

He half opened the door.

"Miss Christie, ask Dr. Cameron if he can see Mr. Baxter now." He leaned back in his chair eyeing Sam with a quizzical expression. "You're mighty damned sure you're going to be successful, aren't you, Mr. Baxter?"

"Nothing can stop me."

Miss Christie knocked.

"Dr. Cameron says to come on down."

"Better see this guy now," Dr. Sherwood said. "Get it over with."

Dr. Cameron was thin and stooped, a little man whose clothes hung on him as if they had been intended for somebody twenty pounds heavier. His pale blue eyes were almost expressionless. Dr. Sherwood made the introduction as brief as possible, then turned to go.

"See you in about half an hour?" he inquired.

Dr. Cameron nodded absently without looking up from the cards he was sorting. Not until every one was in its proper place did he seem aware of Sam's existence.

"So you're Samuel Baxter, the new candidate for enfer?" he said, consulting one of the cards.

"That's right," Sam replied, settling back in his chair. He felt

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like a bad boy summoned to the principal's office for some misdeed.

"I suppose Sherwood has already briefed you on the perils of enfer?"

"He has."

"And you're not afraid?"

"Not in the least."

Dr. Cameron removed the top card from the pack in his hand and laid it face down on the desk, as if he were playing some kind of game.

"Now, Mr. Baxter, I have a few questions. You don't have to answer them if you don't like. This is not a court of law and you are not under oath."

"Fire away," Sam told him. "Ask anything you like. I'll be only too glad to answer."

"Thank you," Dr. Cameron said, laying another card face down on the table. "Your cooperation in this difficult matter is much appreciated."

The little doctor seemed uncertain how to proceed. Sam began to feel rather sorry for him.

"Mr. Baxter, have you ever been in a situation that you would regard as particularly perilous?"

Sam thought awhile.

"Well . . . I was chased by a bear in Yellowstone Park."

Dr. Cameron's face retained its usual impassive expression.

"What happened?"

"I got away. I was younger then."

"Doesn't that situation strike you as being humorous rather than dangerous?"

"It sounds kind of funny now when you tell about it," Sam agreed. "But it didn't seem funny when it was happening to me."

"So I dare say," Dr. Cameron murmured, making a check mark on one of the cards. "You can't recall any other situation in which you have been involved that you would regard as particularly perilous aside from this incident?"

"Sorry. Afraid that's all."

"When in school did you ever achieve outstanding recognition in any field or receive some special award?"

"Nope. Never won any loving cups or had any medals pinned on my chest."

"Were there occasions when others received such recognition or awards when you felt yourself equally deserving?"

"No . . . not really."

"Mr. Baxter, according to the transcript of your record which I have here, you have been employed by the Colfax Museum for the past sixteen years as attendant?"

"Yes."

"During those sixteen years you have served the museum well and faithfully?"

"I have served it to the best of my ability—yes."

"Mr. Baxter, when did you receive your last raise in pay?"

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Sam hesitated.

"I can't remember exactly."

"Approximately, then."

"I'm afraid I can—"

"Was it within the last six months?"

"No."

"The last year?"

"No."

"The last two years? Three years?"

"It was on the first of July five years ago."

Dr. Cameron wrote it down.

"What was the amount of that raise, Mr. Baxter?"

"It's been so long ago I can't remember . . ."

"Come, come, Mr. Baxter," Dr. Cameron said, a bit impatiently, "if there's one thing a man can remember it's the amount of his paycheck."

"To the best of my recollection it was somewhere around fifty dollars a month."

Dr. Cameron consulted his cards.

"According to the comptroller at Colfax it was exactly forty-five dollars a month. Considering the rise in the cost of living and the wages paid others in similar positions, did you feel at the time that this raise was fair and just?"

"Well . . . considering . . ."

"Did you?"

"No."

"Did you complain to anyone about the inadequate wages the Museum paid its employees?"

"I may have mentioned it a time or two."

"Did you mention it to your wife?"

"I'm afraid it would be rather difficult not to—"

"What was Mrs. Baxter's reaction?"

"She expressed herself as being pleased that I had received a raise."

"Anything else?"

"Well, she felt it should have been considerably more."

"Mr. Baxter, isn't it true that your wife was furious when you informed her of the amount of your raise?"

"She got pretty mad all right."

"Isn't it true that she threatened to leave you unless you went to the head of your department the very next day and demanded more?"

"I believe now she did make some such remark."

"Well . . . did you?"

Sam did not answer. He sank back in his chair with his eyes turned the other way.

"Well, Mr. Baxter?"

Sam's eyes shifted back again.

"I'm sorry, doctor. What was the question?"

"The next day," Dr. Cameron said, speaking slowly but without raising his voice, "on the next day did you go to the head of your department and ask for more money?"

"No, I did not."

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"Why not?"

"I . . . I couldn't very well. He was away on vacation."

"When he got back then?"

"No!"

Dr. Cameron waited a moment. He was like a boxer who scores a point and then ties up his opponent before he can hit back. Presently he returned to the attack.

"At any time during the last five years have you ever discussed the question of salary with the head of your department?"

"No, I never have."

"I expect he was always so busy with more important matters that the opportunity never presented itself," Dr. Cameron said sympathetically.

"No, he wasn't always so damn busy."

"Then why didn't you ask him?"

Sam did not answer.

"Why, Mr. Baxter? Why?"

"Because I was afraid!" Sam cried in a hoarse voice. "All my life I've been afraid. So afraid I've let people walk over me . . . take advantage of me . . . say anything they like to me. I've never stood up for myself. That's why I've never gotten anyplace."

He buried his face in his hands.

"This was my last chance. I was determined to have it. If I failed I was going to kill myself."

Dr. Cameron sat motionless, not a flicker of expression in his pale eyes. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he said.

Dr. Sherwood's face loomed in the doorway.

"Well . . . everything all right?" he beamed.

Dr. Cameron indicated the trembling figure across the desk. Dr. Sherwood regarded him with genuine dismay.

"Doesn't look like a very good candidate for enfer."

Dr. Cameron smiled faintly.

"I should say he's an excellent candidate for enfer. One of the best we've ever had."

The little hospital for experimental medicine at Silurian Lake was one of the most expertly staffed and probably the best equipped of any in the United States. In the opinion of the medical men there, a candidate for enfer should be prepared for the transfer tube exactly as if he were entering surgery for a major operation. Which explains why an attractive young nurse came breezing into Sam's room, stabbed him in the left buttock with a hypodermic needle, and suggested that he relax. He fervently wished that he could. But the exhilaration that had sent his spirits soaring after the Cameron interview was now replaced by a sensation verging on panic. Given a means of escape he would not have hesitated to take it.

Why wasn't it possible simply to put on his clothes and walk out,

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he asked himself. It wasn't as if he were sick in bed. He was perfectly well and strong. Once out of the hospital there was the little matter of hiking a hundred miles across the Mohave Desert. But thumbing a ride should not be so difficult. Somebody was sure to give him a lift. He sank back on the pillows relieved that the problem was so easily resolved.

A doctor and two young men were beside his bed smiling down at him. Where had they come from? Now the doctor was injecting something into one of the veins on his inner arm. He watched the plunger descending . . . almost half an inch now. So far he couldn't feel a thing. Perhaps there'd been some mistake—

Samuel Baxter was in enfer for three hours and twenty minutes, exclusive of time spent in the transfer tube and recovery chamber, far exceeding the record made by a professional Hollywood stunt man. He was picked up by a patrol some two miles from the transfer point, swinging along under his own power. Despite his protests, he was rushed back to the hospital, and held in strict isolation for thirty-six hours while undergoing tests and questioning.

Rumor had somehow gotten out about the big story at Silurian Lake, with the result that the population of that tiny desert community doubled overnight. Previously . . . you name it."

Project Enfer had been a dismal bust. Instead of the fourth dimension you'd have thought they were trying to crack Fort Knox. But now they'd done it! Not only gotten a man into the fourth dimension, but gotten him back alive and talking.

"Mr. Baxter, would you mind stepping over here where our television audience can get a good look at you? That's fine. Now tell us, did you enjoy your trip into this fourth dimension?"

"I enjoyed it tremendously."

"Were you frightened at any time?"

"Not in the least. On the contrary, it was a wonderful and exciting adventure."

"Can you describe the appearance of the world as viewed from quartic space?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid I cannot. It's like trying to describe the colors of the rainbow to a man who's been blind all his life. All I can say is that it's beautiful . . . just beautiful. I wish I was a poet. Maybe then I could find the words to describe it."

"In your opinion, Mr. Baxter, will this breakthrough into the fourth dimension relieve the building space shortage?"

"Definitely."

"How about a little trip into the fifth dimension sometime?"

"Fifth . . . sixth . . . seventh

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"Well, thank you, Mr. Baxter. I'm afraid our time is up. Friends, that was . . ."

Samuel Baxter was reliably reported to have received a fabulous offer for his book detailing his firsthand experiences in enfer, which unfortunately he insisted upon writing himself. But as he had never written anything before, he soon discovered that setting words down on paper was a much harder job than he had supposed. He had scarcely finished the first thirty thousand words when the announcement came that enfer was being discontinued for lack of funds. Congress was unwilling to appropriate the money requested, since there seemed little hope for a project in which only one man in a thousand could be handled successfully. The result was that Sam never finished his book and the whole deal fell through. Readers may be interested to know that the full official report has recently become available, in the *Annals of Exper. Med.*, Vol. 37, p. 313.

Mr. Baxter eventually returned to his old job at the Colfax Museum, where he is now head of the Postcard and Information desk in Anthropoid Apes and Early Man. His friends declare that enfer did something for him. They think his disposition probably got turned around while he was making it with the fourth dimension. For old Sam Baxter today is a happy man. He and Emily get along just fine. She looks up to him now. For isn't her husband distinguished from all the other men in the world as the official holder of the grand all-time enfer record?

Sam will tell you that regardless of how bad the world looks to the rest of us, it is really a wonderful and beautiful place. Its wonders and beauties are right around us. And we could have them. If only it wasn't for our damned stupidity . . .

Drop into the Colfax Museum sometime and ask him about it.

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The introduction of Brigadier Donald Ffellowes is perhaps unnecessary to readers who have followed his earlier adventures in these pages (SOLDIER KEY, *August 1968;* THE KINGS OF THE SEA, *November*). *Suffice it to say that the Brigadier's bag of incredible experiences seems not one whit diminished by past offerings, as evidenced by this strange tale of survivors from earlier times.*

THE LEFTOVERS

by Sterling E. Lanier

I STARTED THE DISCUSSION BY accident. A national magazine recently had carried some color photographs of an alleged giant, apelike creature said to be living in the California mountains. This intrigued me, and I mentioned that I would like to go and look for the beast and wished I were younger.

We were sitting over coffee at the club's big table, four or five of us, and Ffellowes, our retired British brigadier was one.

"Like that coelacanth fish off East Africa," said somebody. "A survivor from earlier times, perhaps, like a live Pithecanthropus or even a Neanderthal man."

"Probably a lot of nonsense or else a crude publicity stunt," said someone else. "You've traveled a lot, General Ffellowes, what do you think?"

" 'Brigadier', please, not 'General'," said Ffellowes absently. "Our generals begin with major general. A lot of nonsense? I saw the pictures and they looked extremely convincing to me, I must say. But I don't think I want to look for the thing, not myself. If it *is* a survivor, a sort of leftover, as it were, why I would leave it quite to itself, or themselves properly speaking. There must be more than one, if they do exist, you know."

He looked vacant, his red, clean-shaven face smooth as a boy's, his eyes focused on nothing as he stared over our heads.

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I scented a story. The vacant look and musing manner had always preceded one of Ffellowes incredible tales in the past, and I felt sure there was something similar on his mind now. Several others, who had heard him in the past, also looked alert. None of us dared speak, because Ffellowes is moody. Usually you can let well enough alone and he'll talk by himself, but if someone says something at the wrong moment, he simply shuts up. We waited.

"If my geological knowledge is not too dated," he said, still looking at the mantelpiece, "these man-apes and hairy giants once existed in the Pleistocene epoch, about a million years ago, and may still be with us. Why not, indeed? A million years is nothing in terms of the Earth's history."

Mason Williams had been sitting glaring at Ffellowes since he first spoke. Williams disliked him, and the British in general, but he couldn't seem to stay away from him, either. Now he had to say something.

"A million years ago there was only the beginning of intelligence, pal. That's a mighty long time and it's how long it took to develop *us*, from whatever ancestor you pick."

Exactly what his point was, I don't really know. He'd just been looking for something to argue with Ffellowes about, and this was the first statement he could pounce on.

Ffellowes stared coldly at Williams, and I knew it was touch and go. He'd either clam up or be irritated enough to go on talking. But we were lucky.

"Intelligence, according to a number of experts in the field of evolution, a study, Williams, somewhat removed from stockbroking, may well be an accident. That Pleistocene or Pliocene, or even earlier still, hominids of some sort achieved it could very well be ascribed to luck. Circumstances in one place loading the dice, so to speak, in terms of the right animal, the right climate, the right *impetus*." He fell silent again.

Williams opened his mouth, but what he was about to say will remain unknown, because Ffellowes started talking, steadily and precisely, in a way which permitted no interruption, at least not by anyone of Williams' caliber.

"I rather imagine none of you know the Hadhramaut, do you? I thought not. Well, it's the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula, the area the British just abandoned when we left Aden last month. If you go from the Aden area east, you run through a lot of what were called 'associated states'; and finally, a little more than halfway, on a map, across the Arabian peninsula, you hit Oman, a sort of dreary, fringe state which borders Saudi Arabia on the southeast, cutting it off

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from the sea. Now that we're gone, I rather imagine that the Saudis will do something about Oman. They could use a seaport on the Indian Ocean. But that's by the way.

"A most unpleasant country to travel in, the Hadhramaut, unless one is, or appears to be, a part of the scenery *and* very well armed in addition. Two people simply aren't enough, or weren't in 1924.

"A Sudanese Arab named Moussa wad Helu and I were moving east along the coast, quite near the Oman border and hoping we'd get out alive. I'd been sent to get some information on a reputed Mahdi, a prophet, who was going to expell the British from that part of the world, and I'd got myself rumbled. You'd say 'blown' now I think.

"Old Moussa, who was an awfully sound chap, one of our best men in the area, volunteered to get me out, before the Mahdi's boys did me in, that is. We left a ghastly hole called Hauf on the run, with the opposition firing badly aimed Lewis guns at our backs. We had two fairish camels and a limited amount of food and water, plus one rifle, two pistols and an assortment of knives. I was rigged out as an Arab but couldn't have fooled anyone. I speak Arabic but appearances are against me. I'd been hiding, lying low inland collecting information when the balloon went up.

"We knew the local Mahdi's people would be after us like a shot, and we only had one ace in the hole. This was a big torch, a flashlight, for signaling a motor torpedo boat the Navy had in the area. We'd got a last message off on my wireless set before we destroyed it, and we could only hope the boat would be cruising along looking for us where it was supposed to be.

"We rode all through the night, along the low dunes behind the beach. It was cool and lovely, but we knew what the next day would be like.

"In the dawn light the ocean stretched like a sheet of pink glass on our right. There was a narrow stretch of pebbly beach, about a quarter mile of exposed coral reef, because the tide was out, and then the empty, motionless sea.

"We rode on all through the burning hot day, hoarding our water and not talking. The vague rendezvous with the MTB was about fifty miles ahead, and we knew the local bad types were sure to be not too far behind.

"Lovely scenery if one had the time to enjoy it, really. I saw a flock of large black and white birds, not gulls or terns, but something else, standing on the reef at one point. That was all that moved until about noon. Then I pulled up my oont with a jolt. There were five blackish, hunched figures way out on an outcrop of

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coral, scrabbling about in the shallow water.

" 'Only dwellers of the tide, Effendi,' said Moussa, also reining up. 'They are dwarfs, harmless, not even able to kill. They eat all the dirt cast up by the sea, shells and seaweed, dead fish also. They are no danger to anyone.'

" 'Are they then *Bedawi* (Arabs)?' I asked.

"He looked disgusted, his narrow, sun-blackened face wrinkled in contempt. 'They are barely human. They have no house, nothing. God never sent the Prophet, blessed be His Name, to speak to such as they. But they are very old. They have always been here.'

"This was apparently all he cared to say, and we moved off again. I looked back at the strange little shapes and wished I knew more about them.

"At dusk we stopped. The straight shore had sloped in a little, and some sort of seep had brought enough water to form a small bog at the entrance of a shallow gully. It was a nasty, evil-smelling place, but the camels needed rest and so did we. Also, and this was even more important, the camels could drink the brackish, scummy water of the seep and allow us to save our waterskins.

"The mosquitoes were particularly bad, so we tethered the animals in the gully and climbed to its western edge to both rest and keep watch. I noticed Moussa seemed a bit edgy, constantly glancing about, you know, and I finally asked him if he had heard or seen anything that disturbed him. He'd been quite relaxed earlier in the afternoon and had even said we had a good lead on the opposition, so this change in attitude got the wind up a bit for me.

" 'I don't like this place, Effendi,' he finally said. 'No one comes here. It has a bad name among all the people of the Hadhramaut. I wish we were far enough along the shore to signal the English ship.'

"I looked about us more carefully, but I couldn't see anything very disturbing. A range of barren, reddish hills rose inland, the ground sloping up rather sharply from the sea coast. Below us, in the light of late afternoon, the camels fed placidly in the marsh, ignoring the clouds of gnats and mosquitoes around them. I couldn't see what was bothering the man, a very tough customer indeed, and I said so, telling him at the same time to calm down a bit. To get him in a better mood, I asked him to give me a bit more detail about the area and why it was so disliked.

" '*Dawut,* Effendi,' he said, staring at me with his red-rimmed eyes. Now *dawut* means a number of things, depending on the context of your speech. His meant magic, magic and sorcery.

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"I had sense enough to keep from smiling, and I think this reassured him. He fiddled with his big, sickle-shaped Hadhramaut dagger and then went on, clearly speaking with an effort.

" 'Not all of the demons were caged by Suleiman bin Daoud,'—that is, Solomon. 'All sensible men know this. *Djinn* and *Grol* still live in the Rub' al Khali, the greatest of deserts to the north, claimed now by ibn-Saud. But around here,' and he looked around in the failing light, 'here the cursed ones, the worst of those ancient ones who lived before Adam, the *Beni* (unpronounceable) are said still to hide. That is why no one ever comes here.'

"After the word *Beni,* which means 'sons of' the next word had been a curious grating hiss, which I can't imitate now and which somehow made me rather uncomfortable then.

"I was quite intrigued. Moussa was anything but soft, and I'd never heard a superstitious word out of him before. Now all this tosh about magic and devils came boiling out like beer from a shaken bottle. It was all very surprising and mysterious.

"There was still light enough to see one another quite well, and some contempt or something must have shown on my face. His mouth shut like a trap and he swung away down the slope. Over his shoulder he called back, " 'We have rested long enough and we must keep moving. Otherwise we will miss the English ship.'

"I couldn't argue that, so we went down, unhobbled the camels and set off over the dunes again. The daylight was now very dim, and the blazing stars of the tropics were clearly visible. On our right the Indian Ocean lapped at the pebbles, and aside from the shuffle of our camels and the creak of our leather gear, this was the only sound. We could see well enough to ride if we didn't move too fast, and as the night came on, the stars gave us quite decent visibility.

"Every so often and with increasing frequency, we came to one of the marshy, ill-smelling wadis, or gullies, sloping down from the hills, and I soon noticed that Moussa gave these as wide a berth as possible. I knew that I must always follow him, because he knew the country and I didn't, but when we finally waded the camels out knee-deep into the ocean to avoid one of these little estuaries, I asked him what he thought he was doing.

" 'Be silent!' he said in a carrying whisper, whipping around in his saddle. I could see the whites of his eyes clearly. 'If you make any more sound, I will forget my oath and leave you here. We are in deadly danger, and because you are stupid we will die if

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we are not careful. Now—silence!' He turned and urged his beast on.

"This was a new Moussa with a vengeance! No 'Effendi' and a threat to leave me flat in addition. I made up my mind to have it out with Master Moussa at a later date, but meanwhile I kept my mouth shut and followed.

"Now in the silence that followed, I suddenly became aware of something new. Moussa and most other desert Arabs I ever met could beat me all hollow at seeing things far away. I reckon our civilized noses aren't worth much either, and again he could catch scents I couldn't begin to detect. But his ears were curiously inefficient, compared to mine. I've noticed this before among other various folk who live out of doors, notably in West Africa, and I have no idea why, but it's a fact nonetheless.

"I heard something now and I didn't much care for it either. It was a curious padding and scuffling noise, and it seemed to come from our left where the land rose. At first it seemed near, then farther away, then closer again. We were riding at a slow trot over the gentle sea face of the sand dunes, and I finally caught on to just what I was hearing.

"Some thing, or things, was moving parallel to us along the other side of the line of dunes, and the slight variation in the height of the dunes made for the difference in the sound.

"I looked at Moussa's back, but even though it appeared tense, I knew somehow he couldn't hear what I could. What should be done, I wondered?

"Finally, I urged my camel alongside his to get his attention quietly. As he looked up in surprise, I pointed to my ears and made a motion of someone walking or running with my fingers. Then I pointed to our left, to the crest of the dunes. The starlight was so bright that it was easy for him to see what I was doing.

"He caught on at once and his face went all drawn and taut while his mouth opened in an 'o' of surprise. Then he unslung his rifle in one motion and laid it across his saddlebow. He took out his pistol and jammed that in his cartridge belt and motioned to me to do the same. Next, he waved me around him so that I rode on the ocean side, but next to him. All this was done without our camels breaking stride, and I was beginning to get a bit shaken.

"He angled our line of march down off the dunes onto the pebbly strand itself and even further, so that the camels were running almost in the calm water itself. They had speeded up, by the way, and we were now moving at a pretty fair clip. They were well-trained camels and the hour's rest had done them good.

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"I could hear nothing now, because the plash of their feet in the water made too much noise, but I felt sure we were not out of danger. Soon I saw the reason why. Up ahead, the dunes suddenly got very low and then for a space vanished. This flat lasted about half a mile, and then the dunes resumed again. A wave of fetid odor told me we were coming to yet another tidal marsh where still another wadi led to the sea.

"The camels were running ankle-deep now, and any deeper would have slowed them badly. We were in the best possible position to meet whatever was pacing us, and as the last dune halted abruptly, I got my first sight of it, or rather, them.

"A line of lean dark figures, perhaps a score or more, erupted over the crest of the white dune and poured down the face of it in our direction. In a second, they were out on the flat and coming after us like race horses. And they were men! The starlight showed their long legs clearly as they ran, in tremendous, leaping strides. By heavens, I had no idea men could run like that, and, mind you, I'd seen Masai and Shilluk warriors, both supposed to be tops in that field. They came on in utter silence, what's more, and Arabs would have been yelling like the devil by now. Also, desert Arabs don't like fighting at night, and won't if they can help it.

"Moussa beat his camel and mine, too, with his goad, and we went on at a fine pace over the sea's edge, but behind us those dark figures got more and more distinct in the starlight.

"In a pinch, you couldn't find better than Moussa. Not all Arabs can shoot, but a lot can, and he was one. He spun on his saddle and began snapping his Enfield off like a veteran. I saw one runner go down, but the rest came on. Then he hit another, who veered off into the water and fell with a mighty splash, and they seemed to check for a moment. By this time, I'd made up my mind whatever they were, they certainly were no Arabs for they were naked or almost so, and I really could see no clothes of any sort at all.

"Moussa reloaded in the saddle and we thundered on. The dunes had reappeared again, but our enemies weren't taking cover, but coming on right behind us once more, and once more they were gaining. Such running I simply could not believe.

" 'Effendi,' yelled Moussa, 'the camels can't last at this speed. How far to the ship-meeting place?'

"Now I'd been devoting a lot of thought to just that, and I felt sure it wasn't much further. I'd been checking a pedometer at intervals, and it works on camelback, you know; and with that and a certain landmark, a small

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island now visible off the coast, I knew we were only about two miles or so away. Of course, if the boat wasn't there. . . !

"Actually, it was *quite* a narrow squeak, what with one thing and another. I'd hauled out my big torch from the saddlebag and started blinking it like mad in an SOS aimed out to sea. Moussa was shooting again, really browning the lot, I suppose, but I couldn't see, being busy with the light. What a chase! And still not one bloody sound out of those beggars. If it hadn't been for the rifle, it all could have been a bad dream.

"My camel gave way suddenly with no warning at all. The poor brute had done its best, and it collapsed kicking and threw me over its head into the shallows. As I flew through the air, I kept thinking to myself, don't let the pistol go, and I managed to hold it as I hit in about three feet of water. It was a big 'broom handle' Mauser automatic, and as I staggered erect, three of them were on me, coming through the shallows like Olympic sprinters.

"I blinked the salt out of my eyes, flipped the change lever to full auto and sprayed all three until the magazine was empty.

"I downed them all, but one got his hand on my arm and pulled me under with him. I pulled free of the body as the grip relaxed and there was Moussa and his camel beside me.

" 'Get up behind me quick,' he called, and believe me, I did. He was still shooting over my head, but then his shots stopped as I mounted, and by the time I'd hauled myself up, the night was quiet again. As we sat in the shallow water, watching and listening, I could hear the MTB's engines as it swept in to meet us, and in another minute a searchlight beam had picked us out. We shot Moussa's camel, nothing else to do, and left the area in a great hurry. I wasn't sorry to see the last of it.

"You see, the flash of my pistol had lit up my attackers all too clearly. They were about seven feet tall, stark naked, hairless and covered with minute blackish scales. In addition, their mouths were full of needle-like fangs, and they only had two holes where a nose ought to be. Their hands had long, sharp claws on the fingers, which I can demonstrate."

No one said a word as Ffellowes removed first his coat and his left cuff link and finally rolled up his sleeve. There on his inner elbow were four savage white wheals, obviously done a long time ago.

"Yes," he went on, "if anyone wants to look for Pleistocene man in California, good luck to him. I rather fancy I've seen Paleozoic Man, and that's quite enough of a leftover for me, thank you. Someone else can find the others."

Even Williams could think of nothing to say. ◄

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The make-up of a "strong man" is somewhat different in a modern world where crises are more cerebral and emotional than physical. Thus, when a man is married to a scientist with a touch of genius, it can lead to a bitterness that no physical defeat can match in intensity.

AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS

by Joseph Green

VALENCE UPPSALA HAD JUST finished a temporary hookup of his ship's portable powerpak to the station's air condenser when he heard the muted, crackling thunder of phased ion rockets braking in an atmosphere. He looked up and saw the one-man scout dropping rapidly toward the small rock outcropping a kilometer away, where his own ship rested. It was the only solid ground in the sea of sand around the station, and he had landed conservatively in the center. There was barely room for another vessel.

He pressed the start button and listened to the long-silent condenser wheeze into action. After a moment it quieted and settled into a steady working drone. His eyes were on the incoming scout, and suddenly he realized who had to be at the controls. Valerie! The knowledge jolted him with the single hard blow of a static shock. His breathing deepened, and the rush of oxygen through his light jumpsuit's discriminators quickened to a steady sighing. He glanced down at his long, capable hands, bare from the wrists out, and saw them slowly tightening, as though around a slim neck. Valerie. He had not seen her in twelve years, since the day they parted at the spaceport after returning to Earth.

They had landed with Valerie suffering from the usual space *cafard;* he had sand in his eyes, memory and blood. It had been

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imperative that he return to the cool northern woods of his native Scandinavia immediately, to fulfill a deep need for green growth, life, the splendor of trees. It was over a week before he returned to civilization, to find in his communicay tray the official notice that Valerie declined to renew their marriage.

The shock of rejection was still strong when Valence returned from a fruitless trip to the university—Valerie was en route to visit her own kin—and turned on the communicay's visual. He dialed a replay that Geoffrey Able, their graduate professor and field-trip sponsor, had advised him to see. The official death notice of the neutral name of "Victory", chosen by Valence Uppsala and Valerie Es'ahdrin for their one-year contract, was slowly crushed into a paper ball as he watched his recent mate being interviewed life-size on the wall screen, heard for the first time the guiding rules that enforced cooperation between independent cells in all multicell beings. Sometime recently, after a year of laughing opposition, she had suddenly discarded her unworkable external contact theory and switched to his own more orthodox approach. But then she had performed one of those incredible mental jumps he could never understand, springing ahead of his methodical progress without logic or reason, and achieved a breakthrough. He knew, hearing it, that he had been working toward this basic of life, the Principle of Summative Control, from the beginning, and in his own plodding way might have reached it when the last analysis was in. But Valerie had the genius touch, the firefly glow . . . and she had leaped far ahead of him to the final answer.

At the end of the program he was not surprised to see that he was listed as co-finder, under his born name. Their marriage had never been. His long fingers were trembling slightly as he methodically tore the paper ball to shreds. Next day he assigned his share of all proceeds to the university and accepted a teaching position at the new school on Tau Ceti Two. He had not seen Valerie, or Earth, since, but he heard later that she had married Geoffrey Able.

Valence Uppsala looked down at the strong hands, equally capable with tool or pen, and realized for the first time that they could also commit murder.

The new ship settled toward the rock at an angle, exposing the standing scout to a minimum of plasma but kicking up more blinding sand and increasing the difficulty of an already rough landing. The approach had to be fast. He felt his breath catch when it looked as though the fiery tail was going to swing into the rock rather than over it, but that was a de-

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ception of distance. The ship touched down gently, swayed forward, and settled back safely.

The miniature sandstorm was slow in dying. After a moment he realized the turbulence had started a small whirlwind. That meant a low-pressure front was passing, and on this planet such fronts were often followed by severe storms.

He turned and walked around the dome toward the airlock, passing the one indulgence they had designed into the station, a thick, reinforced-glass picture window that fronted on the rusty red water of the lake. Now it stared out over the dense liquid like an eye scratched by the granules of a severe trachoma infection. The pervasive, abrading effects of the sand were visible everywhere. The storms that had made their year here sometimes hazardous must be getting more severe, a sign that the dying planet, biologically speaking, was at the death-rattle stage. The building was still airtight, though, and as soon as the condenser increased the oxygen content from the ambient five percent to an acceptable fifteen, he could shed the jumpsuit.

He pulled the cover off the still inoperable power supply rack and in two minutes had located a clouded crystal block. He replaced the defective unit with a spare and had the satisfaction of seeing the green "ready" light flash on. He started activating station systems one by one at the main console and saw all status lights except the radio indicate "operating". That settled the question of whether he should contact the newcomer, since the jumpsuits did not contain a communication system.

He was checking the robomixer and its biobrain computer, the one item in the station almost worth the expense of shipping back to Earth, when the inner airlock door opened. As she closed the low hatch and straightened, he saw that it was indeed Valerie, and the old wicked grin was twisting the generous mouth into a familiar crookedness.

"Hello, Lance," she said, almost too casually. "Came by to renew my culture stock and find you here. Most unpleasant surprise."

Her voice was muffled by passage through the air escape valve, and the loose jumpsuit hid the tall, rawboned, wide-shouldered figure. Despite these obstacles the magic reached out and caught him again, the compelling and sometimes overpowering sense of her presence. He resisted the lure, and suddenly raw hatred boiled deep within and surged to the surface, so strong that he had to place his hands behind him and lock them together in quivering tension. She watched him, amused, obviously enjoying the internal conflict raging in his body, glad she could

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still affect him and confident of the outcome.

It was the confidence that hurt most. If she had been even a little afraid . . . the urge to smash that infuriating grin was irresistible, and he started toward her, arms self-consciously tight at his sides. Her grin faded and was replaced by an alert watchfulness. The right hand dropped to one of the suit's large pockets; he saw the familiar bulge of a stunner inside. Then he was standing in front of her and it was too late to draw the weapon. But there was still no fear in her eyes.

He stopped, not knowing what he was going to do, and she waited. For a dragging, silent moment the tension endured, and then slowly the wide mouth that had given him such joy for a year started to open, and seconds later a loud but feminine peal of hearty laughter turned him crimson with shame. He was defeated, and knew it, and he could only stand in helpless impotence while the mocking sound went on and on. Still laughing, she strode past him and lowered her angular body into the console chair. He waited, and she stopped abruptly and said, "Do you know there's a big sandstorm on the way? I saw it as I was coming down. It's close."

He was no killer after all; it had been a self-delusion, thinking he could strangle any woman, even Valerie. He looked down at the competent hands that had finally failed him, and dully told her it wouldn't matter; his powerpak would keep the station operable and the walls were still strong.

"Are you sure of that? Remember that this foamfab grows brittle with age." As she spoke a sudden gust of wind shot a spray of sand against the window.

Valence started digging into memory for the emergency procedures. The high pressure cover should be placed over the wastes outlet, and condenser sand-baffles checked . . . he asked Valerie to locate the station's portable lights, and she moved to comply without question; she had never argued with him on practical matters. Outside again he saw that the storm was coming fast, great brown clouds of sand rearing massive prominences just beyond the ships. It would be on them in minutes. The scouts were already fading in an ocher haze.

Valence completed the exterior work and started back to the airlock. Before entering he scanned the lake and saw the rounded dome of one of the nineteen huge aggregates they had dubbed cellbergs floating above the gelatinous liquid like the top of a spherical iceberg, five-sixths of its dark mass submerged. It was only a few hundred meters from shore, their closest approach point to the station. He recalled the hours he had

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spent crawling around in the great composite bodies with a slight shudder of disgust. And he would never forget the first day Valerie had approached one of the dark entrance holes with him and her undisguised and total horror at the idea of plunging within. In the end he had performed all the field work while she remained in the lab. And he was back on the dying planet today because of that field work. In her long jump from a rough understanding of free cell cooperation to the principle that had made them Nobel winners, Valerie had overlooked several sidelights that could yield valuable information. There was a plant adaptation problem on Tau Ceti Two where one of them should apply.

He had just stepped inside the room and closed the airlock door when a rock smashed into the glass window.

It was a freak that could have happened during any of the dozen storms they had weathered in their year. An occasional stone came rolling down from the outcropping on the prevailing wind, but it invariably hit the rounded foamwall dome and bounced harmlessly away. This time a cross wind caught a large one already past the building and tossed it directly at the scarred eye; it cracked badly, gave, and blew outward in thick jagged splinters of glass.

The slightly denser air in the station rushed out and was instantly replaced by a howling, swirling inferno of wind-blown sand. Valence kept his feet by holding tightly to the handle of the airlock door, and when pressures equalized he hurried over the littered floor to Valerie. She had been slammed against a metal cabinet, and stunned. One leg of her suit had been torn above the knee. He saw as he knelt beside her that the skin on her kneecap had been ground raw by that one brief contact with the abrasive sand. Three minutes in the open would strip the flesh off the bone.

As he knelt beside her another cross wind followed the first, and when it abruptly flowed back out, a section of brittle foamfab above the broken window went with it. As the new influx of sand settled Valence saw cracks lacing the wall around the window area. They had to get out of the station immediately, before it collapsed around their ears. He glanced back at Valerie and saw that the exposed leg had taken more punishment and started to bleed. He had to get her into shelter at once. And there was no shelter. It would be impossible to reach the ships in this hell of grating sand and vicious wind.

A stray memory clawed its way to the surface of his racing mind, and he saw where they could hide in safety. But it would be diffi-

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cult to reach alone, much less dragging the unconscious woman . . . he glanced down at the still figure. Only the blood slowly oozing from the scoured knee told him she was still alive. If he left her, she would be dead within minutes.

If he left her. . . ! And abruptly the internal battle started again, more violent than before. No one could blame him; the odds were heavy enough against his reaching sanctuary alone, much less carrying her. And this wasn't murder, not even by default. He owed her nothing, nothing. She had stolen his work, refused his love, misused his trust. She deserved to die.

He became aware of his hands, raw from the sand-blasting, the practical, helpful hands that had just betrayed him; they were reaching for her shoulders. The decision, if such it was, had been made for him. And he realized he had no choice other than trying to save her, if not for her sake, then his own. He did not have the type of courage she respected, the overbearing force that would have let him dominate her. His strength was an internal steadfastness that kept him going when other men faltered; if he abandoned her now something in himself would die as well.

Valence pulled the unconscious woman to a sitting position. After a moment, when she showed no signs of recovery, he gathered her in his arms and struggled to his feet. Valerie was a heavy burden, even on an 0.8G world. He turned to the low airlock, then changed his mind and carried her toward the window. His knees touched the wide foamfab slab they had poured before the glass; and he lowered her to its yielding surface. The act brought back unwanted memories, of similar times when he had eased her warm body to the waiting bed. Valerie had finished the slab and aerated the top twenty centimeters to maximum resiliency. He could still remember her mocking, crooked grin when she remarked that they needed to be comfortable while sharin' for a thirty-one hour night. And they *had* shared, with an intensity he had not dreamed of during their few hectic married days on Earth. Neither his appetite nor capacity could match hers, but they had been deliriously happy during most of the hours spent on that couch. Sharin' with Valerie had been a unique experience; no other woman he had ever known could even approach her. But after the first few weeks, when she had several times interrupted their work by luring him to bed on a sudden erotic whim, he had established a firm rule of no sex during the thirty-two daylight hours, and only one seven-Erhour break for sleeping. During the long, long night they relaxed

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and enjoyed themselves with sharin', talk, study, and an abundant supply of microtapes.

He scrambled through the gaping hole in the center of the window and pulled Valerie after him, careful to avoid dragging her over the protruding shards of glass. She stirred and made a slight moaning sound as he bent to lift her again, and he held her erect and waited instead. A temporary calm had followed the storm's advance winds, as was normal, and he used the time to finish bringing her to consciousness. When she seemed fairly well recovered, he told her what they had to do.

He heard her gasp, and so he took one arm in a firm grip and led her to the water's edge. There he paused long enough to close her suit's escape valve; air would flow out the torn place and keep out most of the water. The wind was starting to pick up again, and a wall of sand battered at them as they began wading. She hung back, not fighting him but not helping either, and he knew she was confronting a dread he could neither share nor appease. They floundered on for twenty meters before the water slowly deepened and they found themselves floating high in the thick fluid, so heavy that it both supported them and resisted the force of the wind. His faceplate was already so cut by sand that his vision was hampered, but in another and shorter calm spell he saw the cellberg and struck out strongly toward it. Valerie followed, somewhat more slowly.

It was like swimming through jelly, laborious and slow, but they made steady progress. Then the hard winds returned, driving streams of sand against their heads and shoulders, and he grew afraid the light fabric would give way under the steady grinding and their vigorous exertions. There was another brief letup, probably the last one before the full fury of the central funnel hit them, and he looked back and saw Valerie falling behind. He waited, and tried to help her when she reached him, but the suits made his efforts clumsy and useless. The berg was close now, less than a hundred meters away; and when the returning fury blotted out vision, he kept them moving toward it.

The water was beginning to heave violently under the stronger winds, and he knew it had to be soon or never. Swimming was rapidly becoming impossible, and his strength was failing. It seemed that they must have passed the berg in the blinding sand, were swimming into the open lake. He was almost ready to admit defeat when one hand struck a spongy softness. He stood up immediately and moved back along the sphere's curve into deeper water, reaching for Valerie. She grasped an outstretched hand and he pulled her

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to his side. There was no time to let her recover. Keeping as much in the water as possible, he started dragging her around the upper edge, looking for the nearest vein. He saw one after a few meters, a round black hole with a diameter twice the width of his shoulders, just below the waterline. He shoved Valerie toward it.

She stopped at the edge, and he knew from the helpless, appealing way her head swung toward him that she could not voluntarily enter that dark passage. Even the strong have their weaknesses. He lifted her bodily, tilted the lean form as she stiffened under his hands, and thrust her headfirst into the opening. Both arms were rigid at her sides, and he knew the dark brown eyes would be tightly closed. He crawled in quickly, and as their buoyancy locked them against the curved top, he turned on his back and gained enough traction to push her hard ahead.

The jumpsuit's discriminators were more efficient in a liquid than in air, but at this distance from the core the water was low in dissolved oxygen. He felt the first lightheadedness, ignored it and kept shoving her forward. After a moment blackness was hovering at the edge of his mind. He paused, breathing in great gasps, straining to pull more free oxygen out of the water, and then resumed his forward movement. Suddenly he could tell that Valerie had worked her arms ahead and was helping; their pace quickened. A minute later his weak grasp on consciousness began fading once more as he used up all available oxygen; doggedly he fought his way onward through the darkening shadows, aware that if he paused for more deep breathing he would not have the physical strength to move again. Suddenly Valerie emerged into the berg's hollow interior, an inner sphere over three meters in diameter. She was abruptly pulled from his grasp as she rose to the top. He followed, and groped until he found her in the absolute darkness. The water in this central cavity was so rich in oxygen produced by the berg's cells that he almost went into hyperventilation before he could control his need for air.

They were safe now, but there was a long, miserable wait ahead and perhaps insurmountable problems when they emerged. If both ships were blown over . . . he felt a bump against his helmet and heard Valerie's voice saying; "Talk to me before I go insane! Why did you come back here?"

"Trying to pick up a few crumbs you overlooked." He shifted position to keep their helmets in contact and told her what he was after. Due to having a comparatively small land area, the people of Tau Ceti Two raised

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most of their food in the planet's seas, and the plant plankton they had brought from Earth, the base of all edible sea-life, grew slowly in Two's weak sunlight. The individual cells of the great berg they were huddling in were plant in origin and contained chloroplasts that had to be periodically exposed to sunlight, but the strange life pattern in the great aggregates reduced exposure time to a few hours a month. During their brief period in the sun, the hyperactive chloroplasts synthesized enough energy compounds to last the cell through a month of darkness. If their secret could be discovered and applied on Tau Ceti Two, the transplanted higher forms at the edible end of the life-chain would greatly increase in number.

The proposed adaptation would be relatively simple, nothing to compare with their earlier discovery—*Valerie's earlier discovery!*—but very helpful on his adopted planet. In a sense the high energy output of the chloroplasts was the key to survival of the trillions of individual cells that formed a cellberg. Each was independently alive and mobile, but exercised the cooperation usually found only in a compound body. The berg as a whole was penetrated by a complex network of arteries, starting as small tunnels in the hollow interior and branching off into smaller and smaller passages as they approached the surface layers. Vascular action on the part of all cells kept a slow but steady current moving outward through this circulation system, and every cell was bathed in the flow. The larger open tunnels, such as the one through which they had entered, served as veins for fluid return to the center.

The cellbergs were the known ultimate in free cell cooperation. On Earth some amoeboid slime mold, such as the *Dictyostelium*, combined at intervals to form a mobile composite body, but this was only for spore propagation; afterwards each cell went its own way. In the berg, cells moved at regular intervals from the interior to the outer layer, where each cell reattached itself for its time in the sun. Other cells followed and accumulated on top, gradually forcing the original one back to the center again, where the cycle was repeated. The entire berg revolved steadily by water displacement, providing both forward motion and periodic exposure of the entire surface. The nineteen huge aggregates moved in a regular circle around the perimeter of their shrinking lake, absorbing from the mineral-rich water the compounds needed to keep the individual cells alive. The dense liquid provided such a poor medium for diffusion that not all solids were well distributed, making regular movement mandatory.

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The cellbergs were the last defense of the last life on this drying, dying planet. Somehow, individual cells living free in the water had combined to form an entity with all the advantages of a body, yet each cell retained its separate identity. When the planetary exploration team who had found these unique globes returned home, their report had caused a small stir of interest in biological circles. Two graduate students in extraterrestrial biology, who had a required field trip on their schedules, had been more than interested. They had decided to combine their first off-Earth study with marriage, and a couple who took the name "Victory" left seeking the answer to a puzzle that had long baffled biology. And one of them had found it. The Principle of Summative Control was applicable to every living creature with more than one cell in its body. The new knowledge gained was rapidly becoming a cornerstone of modern biology.

"The adaptation should be fairly easy, Lance," Valerie said when he finished. There was a brief moment of silence, and then she whispered, *"Talk to me!"*

He recognized the thin edge of hysteria, placed an arm around her broad shoulders and started talking. Two hours later, when he realized she had gone peacefully to sleep, he stopped; and two hours after that, when she trembled under his arm and awoke with a gasp of fright, he told her it was probably safe to leave their shelter.

They emerged from the berg into a day washed clean by sand. Only the layer of grit slowly settling through the gel proved the storm had ever existed. Valence stood on the sloping sphere and examined the shore, now some distance away, through his scratched faceplate. To his surprise the station was still there, though the walls around the window opening were ragged and torn. He looked beyond the dome, to the rock outcropping, and saw his scout resting undisturbed on its center. It was standing alone. After a moment he located the other ship, a broken cylinder of metal at the base of the low cliff. Valerie had probably forgotten to leave the main gyro on when she cut power.

His former mate had also seen her scout. She clutched his arm, and her voice was frantic when she said, "What are we going to *do*! I have to get back to Earth, I can't go with you to Tau Ceti!"

"Simple. Take my ship, have your university credit mine with the cost. Notify the Patrol to come by for me on their next trip through this sector."

She calmed down immediately. "But how will you live, Lance? It may be months."

"I think we can repair the dam-

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age," he said shortly, and led her into the water and toward shore. The intimacy they had shared in the berg's core, a product of her fear, was gone. It often worked that way with Valerie. She lowered her personal barriers only when in physical or emotional need.

It took only an hour to establish that the station had suffered surprisingly little damage. There was plenty of stored foamfab, and he quickly filled in the window space and repaired the cracks. The power distribution system was out again, but this time it was a sand-damaged wire, which he located and repaired within minutes. The solar cells on the roof had been protected by automatic covers; within four hours he had the condenser operating on station power. Seven hours later they were able to take off the jumpsuits. The one really large job left was cleaning out a few thousand kilograms of silicon.

"I can take it from here," he said briefly, stopping her tentative gesture toward gathering sand. She had realized as well as he that now was the logical time for her to leave.

She turned to face him, and the final confrontation was joined as suddenly as that.

Valerie had the high, hot pride of her genius, and Valence his solid, enduring strength. The man waited silently, wondering if it was in him to give, to yield and say the first word. He saw her shoulders stiffen slightly in the old arrogance, the expressive mouth tighten into grimness, and he knew he faced months of loneliness unless he spoke.

Valence lowered his gaze from her taut face, found himself staring at his hands, now rough and dirty. Strange; he would be forever famous as a man of intellect, a major contributor in a demanding scientific discipline, and yet he never felt truly competent or useful except when handling a tool or an instrument. And he had been lying all these years when he told himself his perseverance would have eventually brought him to the answer Valerie had reached in one soaring mental flight. It was far more likely he would have plodded steadily along below the higher range of thought, contributing small gems such as his present project and never climbing upward to the rarefied heights where great universal truths awaited discovery. He was not a brilliant man, and the conflicting emotional currents now washing over his defenses were forcing him to face this essential fact. His hands could not aid him in this present crisis, and he realized with bitter clarity that the small physical problems of repair and operation in which they excelled were of little importance. Life's more important climaxes in

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the modern world were cerebral and emotional, and conflict with another person seldom lent itself to a settlement by force. But unless he could invert his strength, force himself to speak, to acknowledge his dependence, he would lose Valerie again, and his life would fall back into the meaningless pattern he had followed for the past twelve years. It was cold comfort to know that she also had accomplished nothing more after breaking up the Victory team.

He lifted his eyes again and waited, helpless, for the ice of her rejection to freeze his life into uselessness. He could not speak.

Valerie turned abruptly away, but after one step spun around again and speaking very quickly said, "Just one thing. Just one. I didn't hold back on you; the Principle jumped out at me when I was discussing our work with Able, and I saw it, clear and true, all the way through; and when I explained, he realized it was a breakthrough and called the communicay people immediately. I tried to reach you but it was impossible; you were deep in the woods and they rushed me before the camera that same night. When you came back you left without calling me, no explanation, nothing. But you had half-credit all the way through, I saw to that, and half the book royalties."

He felt his mouth grow as dry as the sand at his feet, and his tongue seemed coated with it when he said, "And the contract renewal? And your taking out one with Able after I left?"

The clean, sharply defined angles of her face suddenly seemed strained, haggard, older than he remembered. "I . . . had already decided to wait a bit before renewing our contract. I wanted to learn if I really needed you, either professionally or emotionally. You're so slow, so—so damnably dull in your thoroughness! After you left I signed one with Able because . . . I was lonely, and he was there. But Able didn't have your strength, and I—burned him. He left me after six months, saying I was too temperamental. The truth is we were very much alike, but I jumped ahead of him too often, and he had no compensating qualities to make him feel equal."

For the first time he felt a faint stirring of hope. "And now?"

She lowered her eyes to his feet and surrendered the last of her pride. "I saw in the ExTresBio Journal that you were coming back here. I got the date from your school and came, hoping . . . I'm a cripple. You want to hear me say it, and I will. I have to build on someone else's groundwork, function as a member of a team. I can't stand alone, either as a scientist or a—a person. You have known it all along. I had

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SCIENCE

JUST RIGHT

by Isaac Asimov

I WAS WALKING ALONG THE STREET one day recently, making my way briskly toward some destination or other, and, as is sometimes my wont, I let myself sink deeply into thought.

Now I don't know what expression you may wear when you are in a state of absorbed reverie, but I am told that my own face, under such conditions, wrinkles into an expression of unbelievable savagery. I find this incredible, since I am notorious for my sunny disposition and my carefree, happy-go-lucky nature, but I suppose there must have been some reason why my children (when they were younger) would rush screaming from the dinner table whenever a knotty point in my writing occurred to me and required thoughtful resolution.

On this particular occasion, as I was walking along absorbed in thought, a perfect stranger, walking in the opposite direction on business of his own, said to me as we neared, "Smile!"

I stopped short, smiled, and said, "Why?"

And he said, with a smile of his own, "Because nothing, but *nothing*, can be as bad as all that."

We separated and I did my best to continue thinking and smiling, too; but I suspect that little by little the smile faded and the savage look returned—

I did, though, out of curiosity, take special note of what it was that I was thinking of then, in order that it might (if possible) become the subject of the next science article.

It turned out I was thinking of a new TV program called "Land of the Giants," in which a party of human beings is trapped on a world that is just like Earth except that everything is of giant size. To be spe-

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cific (I checked with the producers of the program), everything on the giant world is scaled at a ratio of 12 to 1 compared to analogous objects on Earth.

This carries to an extreme a well-known type of plot in what we might call "infantile science fiction." By that phrase, I refer to the kind of science fiction produced by men who are undoubtedly kind to their mothers and who are estimable members of society, but who, as far as their understanding of science is concerned, are drooling babies.

Back in the bad old days of magazine science fiction, there were innumerable stories about giant insects, for instance. The reasoning was that since a flea could jump many times its own length, and pull many times its own weight, a flea that was of human size could jump half a mile with two tons of stuff on its back. And, of course, he would be far more dangerous than a tyrannosaurus. Needless to say, this is thorough hogwash, and you will find such nonsense nowhere in the s.f. magazines of today.

Movies and television, however (with some notable and honorable exceptions such as "Star Trek"), are still in the infantile stage as far as science fiction is concerned. Their idea of excitement is to give us giant apes, gaint spiders, giant lizards, giant crabs, giant women, giant amoebas, giant anything.

And none of it would work for a moment because of something called the square-cube law, which was first explained by Galileo three and a half centuries ago.

To show what the square-cube law means in the simplest possible way, let's start with a cube, each edge of which is n inches long.

The volume of this cube is $n \times n \times n$ or n^3. This means that a cube with a 1-inch edge has a volume of 1 cubic inch; one with a 2-inch edge has a volume of 8 cubic inches; and one with a 3-inch edge, has a volume of 27 cubic inches. Or, to put it another way, you can take one 3-inch-edge cube and saw it into twenty-seven 1-inch-edge cubes. Try it and see.

What about the surface of the cube, however?

The surface consists of six square faces (which is why dice have their faces numbered from one to six). If the edge of such a cube is n inches long, then each face has an area of $n \times n$ or n^2, and all six faces have an area of $6n^2$. This means that a 1-inch-edge cube has a surface of 6 square inches; a 2-inch-edge cube has a surface of 24 square inches; a 3-inch-edge cube has a surface of 54 square inches and so on.

Since an n-inch edge cube has a surface area of $6n^2$ and a volume of n^3, this means that the surface of the cube increases as the second power (or square) of the length of the edge, while the volume of the

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cube increases as the third power (or cube) of the length of the edge. If you double the length of an edge of a cube, you increase its surface by 4 times (2^2), but its volume by 8 times (2^3). Similarly, if you triple the length of an edge of a cube, you increase its surface by 9 times, but its volume by 27 times.

The volume increases much faster than the surface, and just to pound away at that some more, here is a table showing it:

Edge	*Surface*	*Volume*	*Volume/Surface*
1	6	1	1/6
3	54	27	1/2
6	216	216	1
10	600	1,000	1 3/5
25	3,750	15,625	4 1/6

The larger a cube is, then, the more volume it has for every square inch of surface. The larger it is, the larger the percentage of its substance on the inside, so to speak.

You can show exactly the same thing to be true of any other geometrical solid—a tetrahedron, a sphere, an ellipsoid, and so on. It is even true of any irregular solid, provided (and this is an important provision) that the solid retains its exact proportions as it grows larger.

We can state the square-cube law as follows then: As any three-dimensional object increases in size without any change in proportion, the surface will increase as the square of the linear measurement, and the volume will increase as the cube of the linear measurement.

This has an important relationship to structural engineering, both in animate and inanimate objects, for some properties of such objects depend on the volume and some on the surface. Since the volume-dependent properties increase faster with size than the surface-dependent properties do, there are many times when size makes a considerable difference.

The simplest example is mass and support. The mass of any object (or its weight, if it remains in a fixed point on the earth's surface) of fixed shape and density depends on its volume. Its support depends on the area of the part that makes contact with the ground.

For instance, let's imagine a cube of substance that has a density of 1 pound per cubic inch. A 1-inch-edge cube of this substance, resting on one of its faces, weighs 1 pound and rests on a face that is 1 square

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inch in area. The pressure on that supporting face is 1 pound per square inch.

A 10-inch-edge cube of this substance weighs 1,000 pounds and rests on a face that is 100 square inches in area. The pressure on that supporting face is 10 pounds per square inch.

As the cube continues to increase in size, the pressure on the supporting face continues to increase as well. Eventually, the pressure on that supporting face becomes so large that the chemical bonds between the atoms and molecules of that substance give way. The cube begins to flatten under the pull of gravity.

The greater the tensile strength of a substance, the larger it can grow before this crucial point is reached, but for all substances this crucial point will be reached eventually. In a given gravitational field, there is a maximum size for any cube of any given substance.

This is true even if there is no outside gravitational field, for as a cube increases in size its own gravitational field increases and forces the cube to "flatten out" or, rather, to assume a shape of minimum energy content. This turns out to be an approximation of a sphere (or, more accurately, an ellipsoid of revolution).

What holds for a cube holds for all other solids—including a human being.

Consider someone who weighs 175 pounds and has a pair of feet with soles that have a total surface area of 50 square inches. When he is standing, each square inch of the sole of his feet is supporting 3.5 pounds. (This is a simplification. The soles aren't flat, and weight is not evenly distributed on them; but that doesn't alter the principle.)

Now suppose that this human being is suddenly expanded 12-fold in every dimension (as in "Land of the Giants") with all his parts remaining in their original proportions. Instead of being 5′ 10″ tall, he is now 70 feet tall.

The giant's weight is now 175 x 12 x 12 x 12, or 151.2 *tons* (as much as the largest whale in existence). The surface area of his feet, however, is only 50 x 12 x 12, or 7200 square inches. When he is standing, each square inch of his soles must support 42 pounds, twelve times as much as before.

This holds for other supportive machinery. Each square inch cross-section of thigh bone must support twelve times the weight it ordinarily does; each square inch cross-section of muscle must exert twelve times the pull it ordinarily does if such a giant is to stand up from a sitting position and so on. To see what would happen to such a giant, suppose you placed 42 pounds (twelve times the normal) on each square inch

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of your soles. To do this, you would have to have a weight of one ton evenly distributed over your body. That would drop you to the floor and crush you to death.

Well, the giants of "Land of the Giants" would drop to the floor under their own weight and be crushed to death. Oh, not necessarily, of course. If a competent science fiction writer were doing the series, he'd hint that the giants' thigh-bones were made of chrome-steel, that the planet's gravity was somewhat weaker, that their muscles worked on some different principle from ours.—But none of that is done, of course. I said, a *competent* science fiction writer.

If you think I'm being too pessimistic about the crushing to death, it actually happens. Sometimes a whale (one that is considerably smaller than our mythical human giants) gets itself stranded on a beach. It then proceeds to die because it is literally crushed by its own weight.

(In water, the whale has no problem. In water, the supportive influence is not the rigidity of bone, but the buoyancy of the liquid medium. The amount of buoyancy depends upon the *volume* of the organism. This means that weight and buoyancy both increase as the cube of the linear dimension, so that size is not important as far as support is concerned. A huge whale maneuvers through water as easily as a tiny minnow—at least as far as support goes.)

Of course, even if we restrict ourselves to land mammals, the fact remains that there are both dwarfs and giants built on the same general structural plan of a trunk and four legs. There are mammals as small as a shrew (less than a tenth of an ounce) and as large as the extinct baluchitherium, which may have weighed as much as twenty tons.

How can such variations in size be squared with the square-cube law? Well, remember the condition—that there be no change in proportion, or (let us now add) in structural properties.

Perhaps the most remarkable case of neglecting that condition involved the Canadian-American astronomer, Simon Newcomb, who in the first few years of the 20th Century wrote a series of eloquent articles in which he tried to debunk the gathering excitement over the possibility of constructing heavier-than-air flying machines.

Newcomb painstakingly pointed out (much as I am doing in this article) the existence of the square-cube law. He explained that the weight of an airplane depended on its volume, while its support depended on the area of flat surface it could present to the air. As it increased in size, the weight increased more rapidly than the surface area, and each square inch of the wing would be required to support a larger and larger weight.

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By the time an airplane was large enough to hold a man, said Newcomb, it would be too heavy to be supported by its wings. It seemed as simple as grade-school arithmetic to him.

Came the Wright brothers, however, and it became apparent that a flying machine large enough to carry a man was possible. This did not stump Newcomb at all. He admitted a machine that large was possible after all, but by the time it was made large enough to hold two men, he said, it would be too heavy to be supported by its wings.

Newcomb died in 1909 and did not live to see the airplane come into its own in World War I.

Newcomb's mistake was a common one (alas) among scientists. Enamored with a relationship, he insisted on carrying it beyond the limits to which it was applicable. He assumed that as airplanes were made larger, their proportions would remain the same; that the materials of which they were made would stay the same, and so on.

But, as a matter of fact, airplane wings were continually being improved so as to offer more lift per square inch; engines were designed to give more thrust per unit weight; stronger, but less dense materials were designed for the body of the plane. In short, through improved engineering, support was increased much more rapidly than the square of the linear dimension, and weight was increased much less rapidly than the cube of the linear dimension.

Living organisms do the same thing, insofar as possible. The bee humming bird weighs only 0.07 ounce, while the kori bustard of South Africa, it is suspected, may on occasion reach a maximum weight of perhaps 50 pounds. That is an 11,000-fold spread in weight. Yet both hummingbird and bustard fly on feathered wings.

But there's a difference. The bustard wings are much longer and narrower in proportion to the body than the hummingbird wings are. The bones of the bustard are hollowed to the last bit so as to be made as light as possible at the expense of as little as possible of their strength. Again, these are changes that make it possible for weight to increase less rapidly than the cube; support more rapidly than the square.

In the case of mammals, the spread from pygmy-shrew to baluchitherium is 6.4 million to 1 for the same general scheme of trunk on four supports. But those supports are not identically proportioned.

If you look at the legs of a shrew, a mouse, a goat, a horse, and an elephant in that order, you will see that they grow thicker and thicker even in proportion to the overall body length. If you could see a picture of each animal drawn to the same height, this would be plain to you.

If a mouse were expanded to the size of an elephant, its legs would

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be spindly in comparison and would break under its weight like toothpicks. An elephant decreased to the size of a mouse, would have stubby legs that would be incredibly clumsy.

In other words, an animal's proportions—the shape of its legs and its wings, for example—are conditioned by its size, and would be all wrong if that size were changed without an appropriate change in proportions.

So do you really expect that man-sized insects would be dangerous? Next time you see a housefly look at its legs. They are mere threads, but adequate to hold up the fly's weight. Increase the fly's size to that of a man and it couldn't move. Neither could a flea or a grasshopper or a beetle. No insect the size of a man that retained the proportions of ordinary insects, could (in the Earth's gravitational field) walk, fly, hop, or otherwise progress the smallest fraction of an inch.

It's not just support and locomotion that depends on size and proportion. There are numbers of other properties that are designed to be just right for a particular size.

For instance, the amount of heat produced by the chemical reactions within a body depends on the weight of reacting tissue in the body which, in turn, depends upon its volume. The rate at which such heat is lost depends upon the surface area of the body (roughly speaking). This means that the larger the animal, the more heat it retains, since the production rises faster than the loss.

In general, then, all other things being roughly equal, a small animal must have a faster metabolism than a large one if it is to replace the more-quickly-leaking energy. A shrew or a humming-bird must be constantly eating and will die of starvation in a matter of hours, while a large animal can fast for long periods. And the more slowly living large animal will live longer than the related small animal (see THE SLOWLY MOVING FINGER, F & SF, February 1964).

It also follows that in Arctic areas where the cold temperatures favor devices that lead to conservation of heat, large size is of particular value in this respect. The walruses and polar bears and musk-oxen stay warm partly by being large. And, as a matter of fact, this may have been one of the factors that made large size useful in the age of the dinosaurs. The reptiles, with no special devices to maintain high temperature, could retain what heat they developed with greater efficiency the larger they were.

This means that the whole metabolic structure of an organism is related to its size.

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Then, too, what about the absorption of oxygen? The weight of material requiring oxygen depends on the volume of the organism, but the rate at which oxygen is absorbed depends on the internal surface area of the lungs.

Simple bag-like lungs suffice for small cold-blooded animals, but warm-blooded animals need more oxygen and large warm-blooded animals need far more. If the human lungs were simple bags, they would offer about 2 square feet of surface for the air, and if that were all there was, we would suffocate in five minutes. Our lungs are broken up into about 600 million tiny chambers, and the total surface of all those chambers is at least 600 square feet.

In the same way, the quantity of blood to be filtered depends on the weight and, hence, volume of the animal. The rate at which it can be filtered depends on the surface area available in the kidney. For that reason, the kidney is broken up into over a million little tubes, and their total length in both kidneys comes to about 40 miles.

Therefore if a man's measurements were suddenly multiplied by 12 in every direction, with no other change at all, he would asphyxiate in minutes, for his lung surface would be increased 144-fold whereas the quantity of body to be fed oxygen would be increased 1728-fold. And if he survived that he would die of uremia in days, for he would have the surface of his kidney's filter tubes increased 144-fold while the volume of blood to be filtered would be increased 1728-fold.

No, a giant man, even if he had his thigh-bones thickened and his feet splayed out enormously to bear the weight of all his tonnage, would still have to have immensely more complicated lungs and kidneys, and for that matter immensely more involved networks of blood-vessels and nerves.

And insects? Insects are ventilated by small tubes in the abdomen where ordinary diffusion is just about enough for the creature's needs. Expand an insect to the size of a man without utterly changing its respiratory system and it would asphyxiate at once. Indeed, nothing would be as utterly helpless, harmless and *dead,* as that great science-fictional menace, the giant insect.

Consider man's crowning possession—his brain.

Man's brain is one of the largest in existence, a little over 3 pounds in weight, but not quite the largest. A large elephant may have a brain that weighs about 13 pounds and the largest whale brain could weigh 19 pounds. More important, however, is the pounds of body that must be coordinated by each pound of brain.

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The body/brain-mass ratio is about 50 in man. That is, there are 50 pounds of tissue to be taken care of by each pound of brain. The corresponding figure for a large elephant is 1,000; and for a giant whale, 10,000. (The largest dinosaurs had a body/brain-mass ratio of 100,000).

Here, at least, we might seem on safe ground and can avoid the square-cube law. As the body increases in dimensions, the total weight varies as the cube of the linear dimension, and so does the weight of the brain. The body/brain-mass ratio would remain 50 even in the 70-foot giants of "Land of the Giants."

But—

The brain cells that make up the crucial part of the brain, the gray matter, that is, are concentrated on the surface of the cerebrum. For the highest functions of the brain (from our own prejudiced standpoint), for thought and intelligence, what counts is not the weight of the brain after all, but its surface area.

As intelligence increases, the surface area of the brain must increase faster than the square-cube law would allow, and it can do this only by forming wrinkles or convolutions. The gray matter, as it dips in and out of those convolutions, is present in greater quantity than if it were stretched smoothly over the cerebral surface.

For that reason, the presence and number of convolutions is a way of estimating intelligence, and the human brain is not only larger than almost any other creature's; it is also more convoluted.

If we expand a man to twelve times his dimensions in every direction and if the brain expands as well in every dimension, the brain will remain heavy enough in proportion but the surface will fall behind. Unless the brain becomes twelve times as convoluted, it won't maintain adequate control of the larger body. If a 12-times-larger giant simply expands his brain without change, he will be an utter idiot, despite a brain that will weigh about 2.8 *tons*!

In short, then, largeness isn't such a great thing. It complicates matters enormously in every respect and, after a certain point, the advantages to be gained from size (such as better heat retention, larger eyes and therefore more acute vision, larger brains and therefore greater intelligence) begin to be overbalanced by the disadvantages of ever-expanding complication.

I like to think, with my usual pro-human orientation, that the size of the human being is *just right*!

(Among the sea-creatures, where support against gravity is no

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problem, the point at which the disadvantages of size begin to outweigh the advantages is higher up on the scale. On the whole, then, sea-creatures tend to be larger than land-creatures and the largest of all animals have lived in the sea rather than on land.)

But what if we move in the other direction?

If we decrease a man's size in all directions, would not the surface area of his brain have less body to handle in proportion? If a 12-times-enlarged person, unchanged otherwise, becomes an idiot, would not a 12-times-diminished person, unchanged otherwise, be a super-genius.

Ah, but a 12-times-reduced man will have a brain weighing about 0.03 ounces. It will contain only 6 million neurons rather than 10 billion. And, no matter how convoluted the brain and how little body you have to take care of, 6 million neurons can't be hooked up in a complicated enough fashion to allow human intelligence.

In other words, the absolute weight of the brain also counts, and we have examples of that. In some of the smaller monkeys, the body/brain-mass ratio is only 17.5. If such a monkey were expanded to man size, his brain would weigh 8.5 pounds. And yet a small monkey is far less intelligent than a gorilla with a body/brain-mass ratio of 500. The monkey brain isn't as convoluted as the gorilla brain (let alone ours), but in addition, it just doesn't have enough cells.

No, our size is just right. Neither too large nor too small.

It may well be that you think you have me now. A couple of years ago, a motion picture called "Fantastic Voyage" was produced. It dealt with the drastic miniaturization of human beings to less than bacterial size. I was asked to do a novelization of the movie script and after some reluctance, I agreed.—And you may now be thinking that I did not then practice what I am now preaching.

If so, you are quite wrong. The drastic miniaturization of human beings (assuming such a thing were possible) involves a number of fascinating little physiological points, all of which were ignored in the movie, and all of which I tried to take into account in the novel, as I hope to explain next month.

However, if you think that I am vainglorously implying by this that the novel was much better than the movie in every respect, you are quite wrong.

The movie had Raquel Welch in it.

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Peter Tate's stories have appeared in England and in the United States ("Same Autumn In A Different Park" in Judith Merril's ENGLAND SWINGS SF; *"Beyond The Weeds" in* SF 12). *Mr. Tate is a journalist, now a sub-editor for the South Wales Echo (readership 500,000). "I don't think a SF writer could be in a better job . . . If you are any kind of dealer with people, you are familiar with current attitudes and intelligently suspicious of behaviors to come . . . 'The Day the Wind Died' is about people as much as a freak environment."*

THE DAY THE WIND DIED

by Peter Tate

GRANDPA WAS UP ON THE ROOF again. He watched the milk float moving down the street and saw the mailman come and go.

All the while, he kept his left index finger erect, well licked and waiting for the wind.

He had climbed out the dormer window which shadow-lit his attic before the others were stirring and edged along the sill and onto the roof parapet, mouthing his tune.

"I'm an airman . . . I'm an airman
And I fly, fly, fly, fly, fly
High in the sky,
See how I fly.
Sparrows they can't catch me
No matter how they try.
I'm an airman . . . I'm an airman
And I fly, fly, fly, fly, fly . . ."

The song was with him now and he flapped his arms experimentally, as much beating time as testing his buoyancy.

The breeze caught his shirt and plastered it against his meager shanks. He remembered his mission and licked his finger again, thoroughly.

The mailman had caught the movement, shielding his eyes against the roof-level sun. He waved.

With his free right hand, Grandpa waved back.

"Have you brought my wings?" he shouted, though he knew full well the mailman had only delivered—would only ever deliver—the perennial round of circulars,

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bills and letters to other people.

"Flew out of my bag," called back the postman. "That's the trouble with these air-mail packages."

I wasn't cut out to be a comedian, he apologized to himself continuing down the street, or I'd be delivering my own lines instead of everybody else's. Humor the old guy, that's all I'm trying to do.

"Watch out for the helm wind," he called back over his shoulder.

"Hey!" Grandpa's excited yelp caused him to turn back. "What helm wind?"

Now for it. Perhaps he had said too much. Well, now he had to go on with it. The mailman sorted the pigeonholes of his mind. Helm wind?

"Due today," he shouted. "Wind from the hills. Light close to the ground and lively up in the air. Just your style."

He watched the old man wet his finger again; watched him turn like a Father Time weather vane in search of the helm wind.

Breakfast time. A good time, thought Charlie Parkwood as he lathered his face and slipped a new blade into his razor. A bacon and toast time of full stomachs, warming bodies and new-day optimism.

With the window half down to freshen the air and the bright bathroom fittings close to him, this was the time of day, the place in time, when Charlie took stock of himself.

Face young and pink beneath its soap beard. Eyes protruding slightly. Like goldfish, thought Charlie, with a head like a bowl to match. Lots of little golden ideas swimming around. Likely today, one of them will come up for air.

I'm a bright young man, and Beth and I and the kids, we're going places. Prosperity looms . . .

He shivered in his vest as a breeze puffed itself over the window and goose-pimpled the room. The first faint nagging of reality came with it, a starting sap to his bouncing but brittle high spirits.

Bright young men, confessed Charlie to his image, were not going grey at the temples. The mirror swayed slightly in the wake of the retreating breeze.

Those ideas are there, he reassured himself, as he did every morning. All they need is somebody other than Beth to listen to them.

Beth, he thought, and the warm glow set in. Beth had listened to him until she knew his vain boasts better than he did. Even corrected him at times—that made him see sadly just how futile it all was.

Was it that the big boys at the met bureau weren't listening to him? Or was it that he wasn't making enough noise for them to hear. Let's not fool ourselves, Charlie boy, he spat at his reflection. When you talk to anybody outside, you're as ineffective as a pint of automat tea.

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Breakfast time. A time when Charlie Parkwood took stock of himself—and was sickened by what he saw.

He was cutting a swath down his cheek when the window rattled violently. Suddenly the mirror was off the wall and coming towards him, with his face climbing crazily out of sight above its upper rim as it fell short, bounced on the edge of the washbasin and landed glass down on the floor, scattering slivers.

Charlie, looking down on it with his hands shaking and his heart pumping, felt a warm trickle along his jaw line. He brushed his chin and his fingers came away red.

"Beth," he yelled. "Beth, where are you?"

The mailman entered the telephone booth, inserted his credit disc and dialed a town center number briskly.

"Eccentricities," he said, when the connection was made.

"File your report." Eccentricities wasted little time on the trivia of polite conversation.

"There's an old man on Acacia Avenue," said the mailman, undeterred. "He is nutty about flying and about the wind. Stands up on the roof waiting for it. Asks me every day about wings. He's an eccentric, if ever I saw one. Harmless, maybe, but . . ."

"The assessment isn't yours to make," snapped the metallic voice at the other end of the line. "We examine the latent hazards right here. Good of you to call."

"Think nothing of . . ." said the mailman. But the line was dead.

Grandpa joined the family for breakfast, humming furiously. He ran a rheumy eye round the table, resting his gaze perfunctorily on the strip of plaskin which lined one side of Charlie's jaw. He made no inquiry.

"Wind coming," he said and applied himself to his cereal.

"There are always winds," said Charlie, impatient at his father's apparent lack of sympathy. "Too many damn winds."

Beth made a remember-his-condition face at Charlie. Grandpa went on eating.

"Mailman told me," he said. "Knowledgeable fellow. Knows as much about winds as you do, Charlie."

Charlie sighed. "Expect he does," he said. "Computers, they're my field. I might be able to tell the mailman a couple of things he doesn't know about systems analysis."

"You *ought* to know something about winds," said Grandpa. "You work in the weather bureau."

"On *computers*," said Charlie. "I just *feed* them with *statistics*."

"Ought to be able to run a few winds past the window occasionally for your own flesh and blood. Seems stupid to me, working in the weather bureau when you don't

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know the first thing about weather."

"Like trying to fly without wings," said Charlie callously. "Like climbing around the roof in your nightshirt."

But old Hiram Parkwood was back in his own sweet world again, taking pot shots at a Zeppelin, coming out of the sun on the tail of the Black Baron.

"That aileron trouble seems to have fixed itself," he said.

Charlie bowed his head. "I'm sorry," he said, though he knew his father would not hear.

The children came down the stairs in a scattering of thunder.

"I heard a crash . . ."

"I heard a tinkle . . ."

"How'd the mirror get broken?"

"Now children," said Beth hurriedly. "Get started on your breakfast. You don't have much time."

"It was an accident." Charlie was anxious to preserve the status quo and end any speculation. "And stay out of the bathroom. There may still be pieces of glass on the floor."

The children fell to examining their father's battered countenance.

"Is that where Mummy smacked you?" asked Mark, avidly.

"Don't be silly," said Amanda. "Mummy only smacks the backs of your legs. The face is naughty."

Charlie and Beth exchanged amused glances. The children's unconcerned rapport had the effect of steadying Charlie's taxed good humor and restoring lost optimism.

"It was an accident," said Charlie again. "Nobody gets smacked for accidents."

"Not even Daddies," said Beth.

"Not even Mummies," said Amanda.

"Not even Grandpa," said old Hiram, back from the blue. "Good morning, children. Have you seen the wind?"

"We didn't actually see it," said Mark. "We saw where it went. All across the gardens. It looks like a good one today."

"That's what I thought," said Grandpa. "A very good one."

He was silent, listening for some rattle of the latch, some whistle down the drainpipe.

The house was still. Out over the hedge and down the street, he could see the leaves of the plane trees lightening before the blast.

He settled back against his chair and eased his imaginary Sopwith into a victory roll.

Charlie kissed Beth on the doorstep, boxed with the children and then headed down the garden path. The night wind at autumn strength had brought down dozens of leaves from the garden chestnut, and they lay scattered like big, soggy corn flakes across the lawn.

He looked back over his shoulder, pointed at the rollicking children and then at the leaves. Beth nodded.

There was little if any wind now, although Charlie could hear

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it, far off beyond the boundary hedge. The roar seemed to grow as he approached the gate.

Stout hedges, thought Charlie. Stout, brave hedges that keep out the weather and keep out the row. He ran his hand almost caressingly through the foliage as he opened the gate and caught the faint ammonia smell of cats on his fingers before he closed the gate behind him and stepped out on the pavement.

A gust caught him and hurled him bodily against the wall.

Then it carried off his hat, laughing triumphantly as he gave chase, howling wild insults in his ears as it kicked the hat further and further ahead of him. Until an unseen hand sewed a painful stitch into his side, and he was brought up short, gasping for breath. The hat grew perspectively smaller in the distance and disappeared.

Charlie, one hand against his side, tried to keep moving as he refilled his lungs. He was only halfway up the steps to the local monorail stage when he saw the cars pulling away and knew he would be half an hour late for work.

Hardly sheltered by the meager framework of the stage, he began wondering how his hedge—no thicker than it should be, in truth—had managed to shield the house completely from what must surely be a Force 9. And anyway, the herbiage didn't grow *that* high. What of bedroom windows that didn't shiver in their sockets and chimney pots—his carefully preserved chimney pots—which failed to sigh the passing of the wind?

For the chilling 30 minutes, he thought hard, and by the time the next monorail train hove into view, he was still no wiser.

The children, meanwhile, were stockpiling the last of the fallen leaves where they could dive into them when they returned from school.

In ten minutes, they cleared the lawn completely and stood close together admiring their handiwork.

"It's funny," said Amanda suddenly. "There's something very wrong."

Mark tried to follow her thought. "What?" he said eventually.

"Well, cleaning up leaves is like digging a path through snow. Even while you're digging the path clear, there's more snow falling from the piles you've made at the side, isn't there?"

Mark pictured the instance, had to agree.

"So where are the leaves that fell while we were clearing up?"

"No wind to blow them off," said Mark, proud of his observation.

"Yes there is—listen."

They listened and heard the currents breaking like surf on the town beyond the hedge.

"It's like I said in the bathroom," said Amanda. "We've scared it

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off. We've killed our little bit of wind. And that's a good way to start the day."

They were skipping round the garden singing, "We've killed the wind, we've killed the wind," when Beth called them to be inspected for school.

Old Hiram fussed over his post-breakfast cup of coffee, blowing on it, sipping at it, grimacing when it stung his tongue, anxious to be up the stairs and away.

With monotonous regularity, he hauled out his ancient watch, scrutinizing it with his tongue moving over his ever dry, thinning lips.

"I don't hear it," he kept saying. "I don't hear it. It is due. It is due."

Beth, clearing up the dishes, took little notice of the performance. Until, quite suddenly, the old man caught her wrist as she passed and looked up at her beseechingly.

"You don't think Charlie will stop it, do you? After the way I spoke to him this morning?"

"Stop what, Grandpa?"

"Why, the helm wind. You don't think he'll send it somewhere else?"

Beth got herself a cup from the cupboard and filled it with coffee from the nevercool. "Even if he could—which he can't—he wouldn't do a thing like that to you. He loves you, Grandpa. We all do."

"That's as may be. But it is supposed to be here and it isn't. That bureau could have . . ."

Beth put her hand over the old man's gnarled fist.

"I'll tell you something about that bureau," she said. "It is a conceit to say they can control the weather. All they can really do is to forecast what is likely to happen and in some cases, take action to prevent it, like . . . like . . ."

She faltered, unfamiliar with the terminology of Charlie's calling. "Like, for instance . . . imagine a forest fire. A sudden switch in the wind and the fire changes direction. Hundreds of men who thought they were safe are trapped. All sorts of unexpected tragedies.

"Now, where Charlie works, they take readings from weather satellites that are in orbit around the earth. These satellites can keep them informed of the winds they are likely to meet and the hazards. And that way, they can think ahead of the fire. Do you know what I mean?"

It was an imperfect and probably inaccurate illustration, Beth knew. But she knew, too, that old Hiram would know no better than she did and would accept her example as an assurance.

"Don't believe in them satellites," said old Hiram. Beth tried deliberately to look hurt.

Hiram winked. "I believe you, my dear," he said. "If you say it's all right, I'll take your word for it. But I don't allow for those satellites. Heck alive, when I was flying, you couldn't go no higher than a

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couple of thousand feet because you started choking and getting ultra-violet poisoning and all sorts of things. They say there's men living in those things. I don't believe in them. Anyhow, I know Charlie isn't in a satellite because he comes home every night, so I guess he couldn't do much anyhow."

Beth had given up trying to follow the old man's logic, but she seemed to have cleared Charlie, and that was the main objective.

Hiram found the coffee had cooled to his taste. He sank it so fast a little spotted his shirt front, and then he was gone out the kitchen door to continue his search in the garden.

On schoolyard duty, Miss Alsop found Amanda Parkwood weeping bitterly in the corner reserved for return milk crates and bins heavy with the scent of old school dinners.

Ananda was a member of her class, and so there was no need for the preliminary of introduction as she bent down beside the child.

"I . . . I . . . looked through the railings and they w-w-were hitting Mark," said Amanda with difficulty. "F-Five or six of them all dancing round him and then hitting him."

The yard of the boys' section was divided from the girls' yard by a high railing, surmountable at no point.

It was an old school, like most of the kindergartens in the town. The focus of education had settled on the 11-13 age group, the stage when a pupil began thinking seriously about a career and selecting the most meaningful curriculum of studies to that end. The kindegartens and elementary schools had been neglected in the enthusiasm to provide the best equipment, the finest facilities to the children of this group.

In many places, the segregation born of ancient adult taboos still existed in a contradiction of the new understanding of children and their educational needs.

And this was segregation—a little girl who had seen her brother harmed and had not been able to do anything about it.

"Are they still doing it?" asked Miss Alsop.

"No. One of the teachers came and stopped it. He took Mark inside. I shouted, but he pretended not to hear."

"Perhaps he didn't hear, dear."

"He heard. I shouted, 'He's not a liar, honestly.' But they just don't want to know."

"Had they been calling your brother a liar?"

"Yes, jumping around him and shouting it. But he isn't honestly. We *did* kill the wind."

"I'm sorry." Miss Alsop was taken aback. "You said . . ."

"We killed the wind. At least, we scared it off."

Miss Alsop laughed lightly. She pointed at the way the breeze was

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wrapping Amanda's dress about her knees. "It's blowing now."

"Not here," said Amanda. "At *home*. The mirror fell down and Daddy cut himself and he made a noise and the glass made a noise and now there are no leaves on our lawn. We've all scared the wind off."

"And that was what Mark was telling the boys?"

"Yes, but they didn't believe him."

Miss Alsop had to choose her words carefully.

"Well, it's not every day a thing like that happens. I guess they were jealous. I'll make some inquiries about Mark now on the telephone. You can come and watch me. I think there's a spare bottle of milk around somewhere."

Miss Alsop entered the school's public phone booth and dialed. She smiled comfortingly at Amanda, perched out of earshot with a second bottle of milk and one of Miss Alsop's lunchtime cookies.

"Eccentricities," she said, when the connection was made.

"File your report."

"Well, hello, anyhow. Nice to know you're there."

"Your report," echoed Eccentricities.

"Two children, Mark and Amanda Parkwood, Acacia Avenue, Helm, report they have—quote—killed the wind—unquote — alternatively — quote — scared off the wind — unquote. Apparently, freak climatic conditions are in evidence at their home."

"We shall check, said Eccentricities. "Good of you to call."

"Don't mention it," said Miss Alsop. But the line was dead.

She left the booth and beckoned to Amanda.

"It's all right," she said. "Mark was a little upset, but he's not really hurt. The man teacher said he *did* hear a little girl shouting, but he only heard the word, 'liar', and he thought you were joining in with the boys. That's why he didn't turn round."

Amanda nodded. "Thank you," she said. "You've been very kind. You do believe us, don't you?"

"Of course, dear. It's just that some people might find the whole thing a little unusual."

"I can understand that," said Amanda, happily.

The Westerly weather bureau was a modest, unprepossessing building behind Town Center, which gave little indication from its exterior design of the work that was carried on within.

The three satellites which straddled the earth on polar orbits at planes of 120 degrees transmitted their data to receiving stations which, in turn, passed on the information to analysis facilities in the world's major cities and there on down in pyramid formation.

It was a mass—nay, a mess—of data, and the task of local comput-

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ers was to extract the intelligence which was relevant to their regions and recommend from fed-in principles and precedents the best way to counteract conditions which could be counteracted—a function more prevalent in the neurotic coordinates near the equator (where, for instance, a shower of magnesium sulphate could halt a hurricane)—and forecast the likely duration and results of the conditions in more settled climes so that folk knew what to expect, at least, and could make their own arrangements to meet it.

Development of the satellite system had not yet reached the stage where each orbiting satellite could deliver an individual read-out for the region over which it was passing. Hence the need for localized computer units.

This, then, was the eye of the whirlwind, as Charlie had christened it in one of his less formidable moments.

Here he went to prepare his little parameters, feed them like biscuits to the great columns and then hand on their reactions to the men of the forecast department.

To be truthful, Charlie knew enough about weather in general to know what questions to put to the machines and enough about computers to be able to punch out the necessary programs, albeit at the close direction of the forecasting staff.

His frustration was at his own incapacity to do either function well enough to be hailed as a prize. He was not a failure, but neither was he a success. Everything he tried, he could do just so well but no better. And therein lay the greatest discontent. Failures can invent lies to cover themselves. Charlie was merely inadequate and no tissue of dreams could disguise that state; no sympathy was spared for the 95 percenter.

Every day, Charlie entered the building and scanned the systems for inspiration; some time-and-money saver that would revolutionize the process; some item for the suggestion box that would give him that extra five percent. And every day, Charlie tasted anew the bile of ineffectuality and slouched to his consol unsmiling.

Today was different. For instance, Charlie was too preoccupied with his problems to seek out the opportunities. For instance, Charlie had a query that might well start the forecasters feeling inadequate. And that was better than nothing, he reckoned.

When he took his mid-morning coffee break, he saw that Amery was sitting alone in the restaurant. Of all the forecasters, Amery was the most blatantly brilliant. Charlie took his problem to Amery.

"I'm wondering how a windless zone can be created," he said as he settled into the seat opposite the forecaster. "I thought if anybody could tell me, you could."

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Amery did not even bother to acknowledge the flattery. He just said, "It can't."

Charlie smiled. Was Amery giving up so easily? He wanted to come right out and say, "Of course it can. I've got one." But Amery's unhesitating reply disturbed him. Perhaps the mystery lay in his own description of the phenomenon.

"I mean, an area which seems to be without wind when everywhere else is bending before a Force 9 blast," he said.

Amery set down his cup with deliberation.

"Obviously," he said, "something is acting as a windbreak. Like hills . . ."

"No hills within miles," said Charlie.

". . . or a strong line of trees . . ."

"No trees that strong . . ."

". . . or eddy viscosity."

"That sounds interesting. Tell me about eddy viscosity."

"If I thought you were taking me for a ride," warned Amery.

"No, truly," said Charlie, dropping the vaguely facetious tone. "I've got a reason for asking."

"Well, think of it this way," said Amery. "Air moves over the surface of the earth like a car traveling on a bumpy road. It is subjected to various little disturbances as it goes, like hills and trees and upward currents of hot air, and these are typical of turbulence.

"In turbulent motion, large . . . like . . . lumps . . . of air called eddies move in all directions as they are carried along by the main current. Perhaps the eddies transfer momentum from one level to another—air in the lower layers may have been slowed by the roughness of the ground and gets mixed up with faster moving air from above and vice versa.

"Anyway, the result is a braking effect on the air as a whole. This is eddy viscosity, and it produces frictional effects.

"Now when the term representing eddy friction is brought into the equation of motion, the balance is upset, and the resulting steady motion is no longer parallel to the isobars, but slightly across, inclined toward the center of low pressure . . ."

Charlie let the forecaster talk on through the geostrophic and gradient wind equations. If this was how he remembered it, fine. He would get to the point eventually.

"So, if it is assumed that the flow of air is incompressible—that is, the motion does not change the density of the air—it follows that the pattern of the flow must be such that nowhere does the air pull up or thin out. It is impossible to have horizontal flow into a region from all sides—there must be an upward motion to prevent accumulation."

"In other words . . ." Charlie was beginning to feel he was getting somewhere. "In other words, if two or more such flows met at a certain point, they would rear upward like

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motorcars crashing head-on. And just at that point, in the area over which they are poised, a sort of vacuum forms."

"Exactly," said Amery, so excited over the prospect that he quite forgot Charlie had taken his punch line. "Do you know some place where this has happened?"

"Yes . . . no," said Charlie hurriedly. "I just like—to think about winds, you know, and the things they get up to. I'd like to forecast myself some day." He smiled. "Hey, look at the time. My computers will be dying of malnutrition. Thanks for your help."

He left the restaurant quickly. Amery watched the door for a long time after it had closed behind Charlie. Then he stood up and walked to the phone booth. He checked a number in his notebook and then dialed.

"Eccentricities," he said, when the connection was made.

"File your report."

"Is it all right if I . . . This is the first time I . . ."

"Take a deep breath," said Eccentricities. "Compose yourself. Compose your thoughts. There is plenty of time."

His hair against the telephone earpiece was wet. Perspiration beaded Amery's brow. The plastoid receiver slipped and slithered in his hand.

He took out a handkerchief and dried his hands and his right ear.

"Now," he said.

"File your report."

"A man, Charles Parkwood, has just been inquiring about freak wind conditions—whether, in fact, an area might be left completely free of turbulence by any natural means. I made various suggestions, and he seemed satisfied. Nevertheless, I suspect that, deliberately or accidentally, he has been able to create an atmospheric situation. I thought I should tell you. His home is on Acacia Avenue in the Helm section of the city . . ."

"We know it," said Eccentricities. "Good of you to call."

"I felt it was my duty," said Amery. But the line was dead.

Old Hiram ate his lunch in a bewildered silence while Beth kept up a stream of inconsequentials in a vain attempt to get his attention.

Both had suffered the encroachment of doubt that morning, old Hiram more deeply but less tangibly than Beth.

She had directed the weekly wash and placed the garments on the garden rotary hoist to spin themselves dry in the wind, gone out an hour later and found them still hanging, limp and dripping, from the immobile arms.

Yet she heard wind somewhere, the rustle of it, the subtle conversation of it beyond . . . beyond the boundary fence?

No. It was a distant engine. It was the monorail.

The children had picked the

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overnight haul of autumn leaves off the lawn just before they left for school, but no more leaves had scattered since then across the grass.

Now they dropped vertically, spinning only in the draught of their own downfall and raising a natural funeral pyre around the base of the garden chestnut.

Beth stuck her head over the gate and looked along the street. The blast dusted her eyes, and she withdrew with tears brimming. Sure, the hedge sheltered the garden. And what about above the hedge? Wasn't there—what was the word? —"turbulence" at every level?

She raised a hand experimentally and tested for some pressure on her wrist, her palm, her fingertips. But it was impossible to tell whether the flutter in the digits was the passage of air or climbing circulation.

Hiram, leaving the house, had toured the front garden extensively, even climbing onto an ornamental wrough-iron seat so that he could see over the hedge.

He saw the weather vane on the distant church steeple twisting hither and thither in an orgy of activity. He saw the trees of the avenue with their branches bending before the wind. He saw leaves blown in whirling eddies down the road and people hurrying with collars turned up, eyes masked against dust and clothing wound tightly about their limbs.

He watched as a man might watch from a sealed room, through an unyielding window. He was remote from the elements. And they from him.

And now he played with his meal, locked in on his thoughts and doggedly determined that he would not be drawn into fruitless discussion with Beth.

Beth, the while, kept her doubts to herself for fear of exciting the old man and starting up his suspicions again.

"Can't understand it," said Hiram to himself and broke off his lunch to search for pencil and paper and then fill the paper with navigation-velocity equations. He left a great deal of his meal and ascended to his attic bedroom, still without speaking to Beth.

Beth noted the time and resolved to telephone Charlie at the bureau when he had returned from lunch.

Grandpa sat in his window, watching how the rest of the world moved in the face of the storm.

By and by, he had worked some sense into the situation. It was the work of the Black Baron. He was on his way here with a bomb, and he had dispensed with local wind resistance so that it could not affect the drop. The baron had never been much of a mathematician, Hiram recalled, even when they had clashed time and again over Northern France. The times Hiram had outwitted him with a tight turn that brought him into an attacking position on the baron's tail, only to

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have his 18 mm's jam just as he had the Junkers in his hairline sights.

But this was the final insult, bombing a man's home. Hiram had to get off the ground to meet him and down him forever in a dogfight well away from the house.

His mechanic had his Sopwith turning over on the runway.

Hiram, urgency trapping his fingers, buckled his helmet as he walked out along the narrow strip to the runway. He climbed into the cockpit, strapped himself securely and gave the thumbs-up to his mechanic. "Chocks away," he shouted.

He taxied to the edge of the runway, moved the engine up to full throttle and began his run. The wires sang above him, the wind tugged at his silk cravat. He adjusted his goggles, eased back the stick and was off the ground, moving out over the town as the residents looked up, pointed, cheered him on.

"I'm an airman, I'm an airman,
And I fly, fly, fly, fly, fly
High in the sky,
See how I . . ."

Then he nose-dived abruptly into the Parkwood drive.

A police patrolman was bending over Grandpa when Beth reached him.

"He jumped off the roof," he said without emotion. "Several people saw him."

Beth looked down upon the broken body and felt sickened—not by the ugly sight but, for some reason, by the audience of ghouls which pressed ever closer up the path.

"He's dead, naturally," said the officer. "Relation?"

"My—husband's father."

"Is your husband 'Charlie'?"

"Charles Parkwood—yes. Why?"

"Something the old man said just as I got to him. The only thing he did say. Sounded like 'Charlie sent away the wind.' "

Beth felt her reserve go. She sobbed uncontrollably. She let the patrolman lead her back into the house.

He made her strong, sweet tea while the ambulance came and went— "No point in going with it. You can catch up later."

And then she talked—about old Hiram's World War I service in the Royal Flying Corps; about how the passage of years had brought a withdrawal into his remembered glories as though the approach of death had sent him scurrying desperately backward across time in search of refuge; about his late preoccupation with the wind and his association of Charlie; a weather bureau employee, with the disappointment he felt when the elements defied the demands of his imagination.

The patrolman took it all down in copious longhand.

"I'll have to make a report," he said. "If there are any matters arising from this, we'll be in touch."

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Then he departed, leaving Beth to weep afresh before she contacted Charlie.

Station-sergeant Malloy of Helm Division read his patrolman's report on Hiram Parkwood's death fall and dismissed the man with a nod.

"A thing of beauty," he said. "I'll show it to the chief, no less."

He entered the chief's office hard behind his warning knock and handed the report without ceremony across the desk. The chief ran a quick eye over it, picked up his telephone and dialed confidently.

"Eccentricities," he said, when the connection was made.

"File your report."

The chief went straight into it:

"Incident report on death fall at 79 Acacia Avenue, indicates victim carried conviction that he could fly. Dying words to officer were—quote —Charlie sent away the wind—unquote. Inquiries showed—quote —Charlie—unquote—to be son of deceased Hiram Parkwood. Patrolman satisfied with daughter-in-law's explanation of statement. Are you?"

"Leave it with us," said Eccentricities. "We already have information about this family and this address. Good of you to call."

"My pleasure," said the police chief. But the line was dead.

Charlie sensed before he picked up Beth's call that something of major importance had occurred. She did not make a habit of calling him at work because she knew his routine was irregular and any call might find him at an inopportune moment. Charlie, then, took the receiver with some trepidation. But not nearly enough.

"Charlie? Charlie, something terrible has happened."

Beth had considered asking Charlie simply to come home, but she knew he would press her to be more specific—even as his bureau chief would press him before letting him go.

"Grandpa jumped off the roof."

"*Jumped* off. But why? How?"

"He must have been having one of his—games. He's been inaccessible all day. He kept asking me this morning whether you'd send the wind away."

"Me! How the . . . how could I send it away?"

"I don't know, Charlie. He was afraid because he talked to you the way he did this morning."

"But that was forgotten."

"No."

" 'No' what?"

"Not forgotten. The last thing your father said before he died was, 'Charlie sent away the wind.' "

Charlie found a seat and pulled it toward him so that he could sit down. He felt sick and he was wringing with cold perspiration.

It was enough that the old man was dead. He could encompass that fact. Hiram had lived on the edge

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of extinction for years now, and Charlie had conditioned himself to the inevitable. But to find now that his father blamed him . . . He had to get Beth to say it again. There might be some misunderstanding.

"He said this to you, did he?"

"No. He said it to the police patrolman who found him. The policeman asked me who 'Charlie' was."

"And you told him?"

"Well, of course. He was bound to find out sooner or later. Look, don't worry about it. I explained about Hiram's . . . ramblings. He seemed to be satisfied."

"He might be, yes. But what about his superiors? Do you think he'll bother to put all that in his report?"

"Well, if he doesn't, we'll have to explain it again. At least he'll say if they ask him that I had told him already."

"I don't know."

"But Charlie, what's the mystery?"

"No mystery. It's just been one hell of a day, and I don't think it's over yet."

"Come home, Charlie. Let's shut it out together."

"I'll come, Beth, as soon as I can. But I don't think it's going to be a simple matter of shutting the front door."

"Hang on, Charlie. Here are the children. What's the matter, Mark? It's no good, Charlie—I'll have to go. They don't seem to have had much of a day, either. Get home as quickly as you can."

Beth hung up. Charlie went to plead his case with the bureau chief.

The Department of Eccentricities was somewhat bizarre in itself, comprising as it did one phone-talk device programmed with every conversational gambit contained within the combined experience of the BIWI agents and one tape recorder equipped to take messages.

The premises of BIWI—the Bureau for the Investigation of Weather Inconsistencies (a lump of a name, let's face it)—lay two stories below Charlie's computer room and around the side of the building, behind a door marked "Stores".

BIWI had been conceived in panic—the agencies were ever mindful of espionage and intrigue and antisocial behavior, and there was no reason to believe that the weather might be any more trustworthy than the Chinese embassy.

But so far the bureau, blessed with an enviable network of agents in all walks (and not a few of the dead ends) of life, had been forced to confine their screening activities to the occasional water-diviner and the even more occasional rainmaker.

No volcano vomited fish upon its island populace, or even lava. Earth tremors were few and easily

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explained and damage was little—buildings in quake regions, constructed on podia, merely braced their legs and took the strain.

Nobody tried to dye snow blue; nobody tried to capture moonbeams in a jar; nobody tried to direct lightning into the local streetlight system. Nobody, in fact, tried anything that might interest BIWI even remotely. Until today.

Today, one Charles Parkwood, whose name appeared in several dictapes drawn from an unusually busy phone, had been accused by his father of his murder. And accused of sending away the wind.

Of course, the old man could be crazy or vindictive or scared. But then there was an entirely independent report on the Parkwood children.

Operative Tyler lined up the reports on the table in front of him and studied them. Then he shuffled them and studied them again. Operative Tempest stood poised and alert at his elbow.

"Looks like the job we've been waiting for," said Tyler, eventually.

"Great," said Tempest. "What do we do now?"

The men came just as they were finishing dinner, unsmiling men who wore their raincoats like uniforms. They introduced themselve

"I'm Tyler, Helm division chief, BIWI—that's the Bureau of Investigation of Weather Inconsistencies."

"Never heard of you," said Charlie. "I work with weather myself, and I've never heard of you."

"Still not surprising," said the second man. "We are not a publicized, glamorized service. I'm Tempest."

Charlie smothered a grin. "Is that a name or a department?"

"Take your laughs while you can," said Tyler.

A snowfall started in Charlie's stomach. He led the two men into the parlor and indicated chairs. The men ignored the gesture. They moved over to the old-fashioned fireplace and regarded the naked conflagration at first with suspicion and then, as it warmed them, with a momentary glow of well-being. They held their hands over the flames.

Charlie cleared his throat. The men returned their attention begrudgingly to him.

"What was it—you wanted?"

"We had word . . ." started Tempest. Tyler halted him with a glance.

"Certain information has come into our possession throughout today regarding incidents, seemingly unconnected in themselves, which have all been traced back to this address."

Charlie was puzzled. "Oh . . . you mean the old man. Look, my wife made a statement to the police. I have spoken to them myself. It's a family tragedy, but I don't see why it should interest you."

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"We've come about the wind," said Tempest. Tyler regarded him with ice-cold disapproval.

"That's right," he said eventually. "There's no wind blowing round this house. Why?"

"How the hell should I know?"

"You work for the weather bureau."

"I'm a technician, not an expert. A guy in the office said something about eddy viscosity, and he could be right for all I know."

Tyler produced a thin sheaf of reports from his raincoat pocket with a flourish. "Do you want me to read them to you?"

Charlie sat down heavily. Dear heaven, what a day!

"Go ahead," he said. At least he might get some inkling of what the man wanted.

"Eight-thirty," said Tyler. "Public operative one-seven-three-oblique-M reported mania of aged male resident at this address for quote flying and wings unquote and quote standing on the roof looking for the wind unquote.

"Ten-thirty: Public operative eight-five-seven-oblique-T reported two children—your children—claiming they had quote killed the wind unquote or quote scared off the wind unquote.

"Eleven-fifteen: WB operative seven-oblique-Met reported you questioning natural likelihood of windless zone."

"Maybe you were working on an alibi," cut in Tempest.

"But . . ." countered Charlie.

"*Thirteen*-thirty: Police operative two-three-nine-oblique-Pat reported fatal fall-type mishap at this address and quoted dying words of victim as quote somebody stole the wind unquote."

He folded the papers methodically and stuffed them back into his pocket.

"It sounds like a murder conspiracy," he said. "A convenient way to get rid of the old man."

"But why would I want to kill him? I *loved* him." Charlie rested his aching head in his hands.

"You would say that, sure."

"What motive?" said Charlie, weakly.

"Maybe he was a nuisance," said Tyler. "And maybe he was an experiment. Once you could harness the wind, think what you could do. This gets to look like a conspiracy against the State, dammit."

"But I *can't,*" screamed Charlie.

Beth Parkwood was in the room suddenly, closing the door carefully behind her. At one glance, she took in the men standing stiffly near the fireplace and Charlie sitting with his shoulders heaving in an armchair.

She moved over to the chair, sat down on the arm and gently but firmly pried Charlie's right hand away from his face. He dropped the other hand and lay back in the chair, eyes shut. Soon he grew calm.

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Tempest looked to Tyler for inspiration. Tyler shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"You might as well know straightaway," he said, "that your husband has been accused of some very serious charges."

"Like what?" Beth was undeterred.

"Conspiring with meteorological forces to overthrow the State," said Tyler. "Causing the death of Hiram Parkwood."

Beth stared at him disbelievingly. "I won't even pretend to understand," she said. "Who are you, anyway?"

"Bureau of Investigation of Weather Inconsistencies."

"An unlikely sounding title if ever I heard one. Now who are you really? Some kind of maverick market researchers?"

"Madam, I assure you . . ."

"Never heard of you," said Beth, with an air of finality.

"Not surprising," recited Tempest. "We are not a publicized, glamorized service."

"And what is your real reason for coming here? I mean, you can't honestly believe any more than you can expect me to believe that my husband's got the weather at his beck and call. As for the other thing, well . . ."

There were still tears left unshed for old Hiram, but when Beth viewed the tragedy against Charlie's present predicament, she emerged dry-eyed.

"My husband loved his father," she said. "As for causing his death, he wasn't even here."

"He didn't have to be," said Tyler.

"Then how . . . ?"

"He just took away the wind."

Beth's mind fled to the clothes that would not dry, the leaves that fell like stones. In the tense silence that surrounded her, she listened for some sound of a passing current, a solitary rattle, a whistle through unlicked lips. She laughed, a laugh pitched slightly higher than her usual rich chuckle. "That's ridiculous."

"Not on the weight of evidence."

"What evidence?"

"We have independent reports here," said Tyler, dragging the papers from his pocket.

"It seems we have been spied upon," said Charlie from a great distance. "By the tradesmen, the kids' teacher, the men in my office. It is hard to believe."

"We have to safeguard ourselves," said Tyler defensively. "This isn't autocracy. It is just a matter of internal security. Our authority over the weather, though it may appear complete to all intents and purposes, is still subjected to occasional boobs and jiggers. We have to keep a watch on every detail."

"If we can control it, anybody else can," contributed Tempest.

"Including your husband," said Tyler. "Particularly your husband,

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because he works at the bureau."

"As a programmer," echoed Charlie. "I told you, I don't have the know-how to pull off these things you claim."

"Well, *somebody* does. And we have to make a complete investigation. You'd better get the rest of your family in here."

"No!"

"Do it, Beth," said Charlie. "For the sake of my sanity."

Beth went to the door and called, "Mark . . . Amanda."

The children came promptly, glad to be free of the stunned silence that had followed on their father's cry and away from Grandpa's empty chair and the place Beth had laid for him unthinkingly.

Charlie called the children over to his chair and sat them one on either knee.

"These nice men are going to ask you some questions," he said. "It's like a game. Only you must tell the truth. There's a forfeit if you don't."

"What forfeit, what forfeit?" clamored the children.

"A *big* forfeit. I might have to go away."

"That would be a terrible forfeit," said Amanda.

"Now just tell us," said Tyler, endeavoring to affect an air of benevolence, "what happened that was unusual today."

"You mean about Grandpa?" asked Mark.

"No—before that."

"Right from this morning?"

"Right from the time you got up."

"That was when Daddy dropped the mirror," said Mark.

"I didn't drop it," hastened Charlie. "The wind . . ."

"I *told* you," said Amanda to Mark. "I *told* you it was the wind. 'Seven years' bad luck for the wind,' I said."

"Ohmigosh," breathed Charlie. "Seven years . . ."

At 21.35, nocturnal inversion began to absorb the solid little aura of warm air from the Parkwood chimneys that had enhanced the westerly thermal wind as it moved in to meet the surface easterly fronting a cold depression. The two forces, locked in a convergence that turned them up and over, fell apart; and as the warm air rose, so the cold rushed in to replace it.

The temperature dropped close to the night minimum. The weathercock on the distant steeple caught itself by the comb and did an abrupt spin-turn.

One leaf and then another moved on the Parkwood lawn. The grass stirred as though an invisible hand strayed over it. The front door opened.

"It's colder," said Tyler, chucking up his collar. Tempest felt a draught at his ears. "Wind's sprung up," he said.

They stepped down onto the

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path to allow their prisoner foot room. Then it hit them.

"Wind's sprung up," repeated Tempest, half in disbelief. "All right, clever fellow. What have you done?"

"What could I have done?" Charlie turned his face to the breeze. "You were with me the whole time. Did you see me flip any switches? Did you hear me mouthing any incantations?"

"All right, all right. We've still got you for murder."

"But how? How did I do it? You admit I haven't been fooling around with the wind—so how could I have taken it away so that Grandpa could fall?"

Tempest chewed his lower lip. Tyler shoved his hands deeper into his raincoat pocket. When he encountered the report sheets, he withdrew them. He shredded them carefully and deliberately. Then he threw them into the air in a gesture of defiance . . . a lost gesture because the new wind caught them and dusted them against his coat.

"Don't bother to pick them up." Charlie was in pursuit already, chasing the elusive fragments across the moonlit garden.

Tyler and Tempest went down the path and out through the gate without looking back. In the middle of the lawn, Charlie discarded his overcoat and then removed his jacket. He shivered luxuriously as the mounting wind plastered his shirt to his body, head back, eyes on the sky, lungs filling with the very essence of the wonderful, moving air.

He saw the moon overwhelmed by great cotton mountains of cumulus and was frozen out of his nuance by the attendant chill. By the time he had regained the porch, rain was beginning to fall.

Diagonally, fitfully, encroachingly.

He opened the front door and called, "Beth."

"On leaving the residence of the accused Parkwood, we observed that there was no longer a marked absence of wind in the region.

"Since there had been no opportunity for Parkwood to restore natural conditions by any manufactured means, we ascertained that the phenomenon complained of (do you think that sounds okay, Tempest?—never mind) the phenomenon which was the subject of the investigation had been caused by some inexplicable inconsistency in the elemental flow.

"Parkwood was therefore attended all proper courtesy and released."

Tyler dragged his first case history from the dictype and carried it to a file close to the office central-heating unit. He singled out the "P" section and slipped the report away.

Tempest had followed him to the file, almost as though he could

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not bear to miss the final act of the pantomime. He leaned now on the unit, warming his hands absently before the convector.

"That coal fire was something, wasn't it?" he recalled. "Perhaps one day they'll bring back coal for everybody." He felt benevolent toward subject Parkwood. "I think a man should be allowed one idiosyncrasy," he said. "I don't see much harm in an open fire."

Tyler was only benevolent toward Tempest and himself. "I think we handled it pretty well. Our first case, at that. We couldn't have done better if we'd got a conviction."

"Says something for the bureau that they can find a person innocent," said Tempest. "Well . . . occasionally."

Beth woke in the early hours, sensing that Charlie stirred beside her. Rain spattered the bedroom windows; the wind moved hollowly about the pipes.

"Charlie?" He took her hand and squeezed it three times in their secret pressure code for "I love you".

"I'm sorry—did I disturb you?"

"No. What's the matter? Can't you sleep?"

"I could, I suppose," said Charlie. "I'd just rather listen a while."

They listened. They heard a rumble and then, a long second afterwards, a splintering crash. "Another beautiful slate gone," said Charlie. "It's nice to have things back to normal."

"Not quite normal. It cost us a life."

"Then it's . . . nice . . . to be able . . . to mourn in peace." Charlie discovered a sudden difficulty with his voice. "It's a pity Dad . . ."

They wept together as the Force 9 northeasterly hammered about the house. ◀

AFFAIR WITH GENIUS *(from p. 88)*

to find out the hard way."

He moved very quickly and took her in his arms, hoping Valerie would never know how close she had come to shattering the strength she respected, and held and petted her through a purging flood of tears. When the sobbing eased to a slow sad hiccupping, he kissed her gently on the lips, and then harder, and then with the repressed passion of twelve long years. Suddenly Valerie whirled out of his arms, ran to the broad low couch and began frantically scraping off sand, looking back over her shoulder, the tilted grin fighting its way across the wide mouth to confound the tears, and he knew again the feeling of being whole. ▲

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This story is about a man who awakens after 200-plus years of frozen sleep. Much has been said lately about Change in the arts and in communication, and we are not sure whether we are more impressed by this story's poignant narrative or its refreshing statement: that things may change more readily than ways of saying things . . .

BENJI'S PENCIL

By Bruce McAllister

GEORGE MAXWELL SUDDENLY felt a web of warmth on his skin, then the burn of his heart's fresh beating, then the first flutterings of sound in his ears. He awoke to focus his eyes weakly on a bare ceiling. His eyes rolled once like oiled agates, then clung securely to the clarity of the white surface above him.

He was beginning to feel the warm crescendoing tones of his muscles when a voice near him said, "George Maxwell, welcome to life."

The muscles sputtered hotly in his neck, but Maxwell turned his head and found the face that belonged to the voice. A pale man smiled back at him, his shiny shaven head contrasted like a wrinkled egg on the thick weave of his white robe.

Maxwell tried his lips, but they sputtered as all of his muscles seemed to be doing.

"George Maxwell, please try to say something."

"Fihnlegh," Maxwell tried. "Finlehrg . . . Finahlrg . . . Finalih . . . Finally."

The other man laughed kindly. "A most appropriate choice for your first word. It makes me want to start off my talk with an apology for the institute's tardiness in reviving you. Do you mind if I talk while you regain your lips?"

Maxwell shook his head.

"The Institute for Revivication wants to apologize for taking so long in unfreezing you. Your records were misplaced for five years and—"

"Ahm," Maxwell interrupted.

"Yes?"

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"Ahm ah curd?"

"Pardon me? Please try again."

"Am ah cured?"

"Oh. Of course you're cured." The man smiled, almost laughing. "All you needed was a new heart. I hope this won't bother you, considering what you were accustomed to in your time as far as heart transplants go, but we put a synthetic heart in your chest."

Maxwell jerked and emitted a feeble "Argh."

"I am sorry. In your time that would have seemed terrible, I'm sure. Something inorganic within you. But let me assure you, you'll be fine. We've been giving people synthetic hearts for a long time, and the psychs always report that there is negligible personality change as a result. Okay?"

Maxwell nodded, a little relieved. His mind was shouting, "Now I'll be able to see the green!"

"Let me finish your formal introduction first. By law I must give you this intro speech, then we'll have some minutes to talk about anything you'd like. Your grandson—rather one of your multi-great-grandsons—will be here soon to pick you up."

Maxwell jerked again, but tried a smile with his limp lips. Relaxing, he waited for the soothing voice of the first man he'd heard in a terribly cold long time.

"Fine? As I was saying, your records were misplaced, so we had no way of finding any relative of yours. By law a relative must be willing to house and feed you for the remainder of your life. You were lucky. One of your multi-great-grandsons is an assistant food-distributor and can afford to support you. But I won't say more—you'll be talking to him soon enough . . . and that's another problem. The language. The written language of this time is not very different from yours. Inflections and sectional dialects often make it hard for a 'new' person to understand. I happen to be an Introducer, so I've had to study tapes of past spoken language in order to communicate with people like yourself."

"Lingige hahd?" Maxwell asked. "Linguage hahd?"

"No, it's not hard at all. You'll be able to pick it up in a week or so. I just wanted to prepare you for it. Now, there's one other matter for intro—"

"Ah git wrkuh? Kin ah get wrkh?"

"Get work? No, I'm sorry. That's one of our problems. Not many jobs, so that's why we had to find a relative to support you. I know you'll feel bad about that, being a burden and all, but that's *modus vitae* these days."

"How longh will ah liv?"

"Ah, yes. Technically we could keep you alive and in very good health for over a hundred years. But mandatory death, I'm afraid,

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is at seventy years of age. Population control, you understand. Family planning and euthanasia. According to our records, you have ten years left. That's quite a while, you must realize. And it will be ten years of life in a time that's new to you." The man smiled again.

Maxwell remembered his sleep, and said, "Ohnly a momenth. A briefh momenth."

"Pardon me?"

Maxwell shook his head to say "nothing," but he was thinking, "He wouldn't understand at all."

"One last bit of intro information. The reason you were revived so late was not because of your need for a synthetic heart. We've been installing hearts for a long time. The problem was the process for unfreezing all of the cases like yours. It's a delicate operation, and we only developed it ten years ago."

"How longh hav ah bin asleep?"

The Introducer opened his mouth to answer, but a door snapped open suddenly behind him. By raising himself on one elbow, Maxwell tried to look past the man to the doorway, but fell back when his strength failed. The weakness scared him. His eyes wanted to close, but his mind's hatred of the thought of sleep pricked them open and kept them quivering.

"I want you to meet," the Introducer said, "one of your multi-great-grandsons." A green-eyed boy in a soft loincloth and baggy shirt appeared by the side of Maxwell's bed. "His name is Benji-tom Saphim. His father will be your guardian."

Maxwell's mind raced into happiness. This boy, his mind shouted, will show me the green of a hundred hills and the warm palette of all the flowers I've missed for so long.

The Introducer said something garbled to the boy. It sounded to Maxwell like nasalized English, chopped but softer than German. The boy said something equally strange to Maxwell, and smiled.

I don't understand their language, Maxwell thought, and there is so little time.

The boy took Maxwell's hand as they left the cottony white corridors of the hospital. It had taken the old man three hours to learn to walk again, but now his legs flowed under him as if the long sleep had only been a dream, and the desire to see green things had not waned at all.

I was an English teacher, Maxwell was thinking, but this drive in me to see the green of grasses and the ripples of ponds and the lace of pastel flowers seems more poetic than academic. Perhaps the long sleep did this to me, or perhaps I should have been a poet back then. Maybe Lana would

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have been happier with me, had I been a poet.

They took a vast empty elevator down to the ground level and stepped out into the quiet city, the boy still holding his hand. Perhaps, Maxwell thought, his father told him to hold my hand— "Take the old man's hand and be careful with him."

The streets were like clean gutters, rendered Lilliputian by the towering cement walls on either side. Maxwell was afraid to look up, afraid that the buildings pierced the clouds; so he kept his eyes at street level, and the boy was silent, a flicker of smile playing across his lips when the old man looked at him.

Something seemed dead. A color was missing. Maxwell stopped suddenly and looked around him. The color green was absent. Maxwell laughed at himself and resumed walking. On many streets of the New York of his time there had been no green at all. He should expect even less green in a time when population increases would have spawned miles and miles of cement structures for housing and business.

At the end of an hour's walk nothing had changed. The same buildings and streets seemed to jump from block to block, keeping up with Maxwell, making the walk monotonous. Still no green. And soon an irrational fear popped into existence in Maxwell's chest, making his synthetic heart beat faster. Was there any green anywhere? Even the green of a man's shirt or the green paint of an automobile would have helped, but the few people on the street wore only drab cloth, and the only traffic was the intermittent passing of gigantic trucks.

Another empty elevator let Maxwell and the boy out on the dark fortieth floor of an apartment building. Maxwell still only understood a word or two when Benji-tom's father and the fifteen members of his family—parents, sisters, brothers, infants and aged —greeted him with the pale smiles of people who were never touched by a sun that had been exiled past towering cement walls.

Maxwell sat on his blanket, the squall of babies to his left, and to his right the rustle of Benji-tom's mother in the kitchen-bedroom. After a week of learning to understand the sectional dialect of Benji-tom's family, Maxwell's heart had begun beating even faster from his one fear. In the language of these people never once did he hear the words "green," "flower," "hill" or "grass."

Benji killed a cockroach that had just flashed across his floor-blanket. Maxwell watched him, thinking, "God, poetry is dead. There is no green." He had asked

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Benji a month before to take him to the nearest park, and Benji hadn't understood him. Maxwell had then asked Benji's father, who said that he didn't understand either, that buildings and streets and food-trucks were the only things in the city. And the city, Maxwell realized with a sick thumping in his chest, consisted of seventy-five regions; a region meant one hundred sectors; a sector was one hundred sections, and a section, as Maxwell understood it, was about twenty miles square. "What is a 'park'?" Benji's father had asked, and Maxwell was now afraid to mention the words "tree," "grass," or "flower."

The absence of green was one part of Maxwell's agony. The first two nights with Benji's family, he had screamed. The pull of fatigue had advised him to sleep, and his mind had bellowed in revolt. He had slept too long and too cold, and he remembered the acid of that sleep. The colorless, dreamless, icy sleep. And the three apartment rooms containing Benji's family were crowded, stuffy and lightless at night. The cockroaches scuttled, the babies whimpered, and the only clear sound was the buzzing that issued briefly in the morning from a black knob on the wall, meant to waken Benji's father in time for his job at the market. Maxwell knew the market, too, and he hated it. He had visited the market once with Benji's father, hoping to find green vegetables for sale. Something green to look at. But there was never any sale. There were only government coupons that allowed husbands and wives to obtain boxes of yellowish biscuits, dried fish, sometimes dried meat. The market was housed on two floors of an apartment building where the walls had been ripped out to permit the flood of sweating individuals flowing in with their coupons and out with the food supplies from the massive food-trucks—those lone members of street traffic.

Compared to the masses, Benji's father was well-off. He could afford to house and feed his wife's mother, father, brothers and sisters, in addition to his own. As Maxwell had discovered the day before, two of the old people in Benji's family were sixty-nine and would be put to sleep like animals in a year.

In the dim room, where Maxwell slept on a blanket beside Benji, Maxwell watched the boy pick up the cockroach carcass and play with it, pretending it was alive, pushing it across the floor, flicking it with his finger to make it slide away "in escape." Maxwell had watched the boy's play before, and the loneliness of the vision made the loss of nature's green things even worse. Mother Nature, Maxwell thought to himself, reached the magic age of

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seventy and was then put to sleep —by cement rivers of human fish.

Maxwell tried not think of his own son. Many people had died during his long sleep, and he knew that, were he to think of all of them, of his sixty years of life with them, he would fail to live in this new present. Maxwell said, "Benji-tom?"

The boy looked around, his pale face the only clear light in the room. The cockroach dropped from his fingers and lay still by his blanket.

"Yes, great-father?"

"Are you ever sad?"

"Yes. Sometimes."

"When?"

"When the food-trucks break down."

"No, I mean sad about living here."

"I don't understand." The boy was smiling, but confused. But he wasn't dumb at all, Maxwell knew, and that made everything a little sadder.

"I mean, what do you do to be happy here?"

"Lots of things, great-father."

"Does it make you happy to play with that roach?"

"Uh-huh." The boy poked at the insect and smiled more surely.

Maxwell was silent. Something that felt like optimism was suddenly nagging at him, asking him to talk to the boy. "What do you do with the roach, to be happy?"

The boy looked embarrassed, confused again, but he said, "I think that the roach is like a food-truck. I push it around. M'father says that food-trucks can run even faster than roaches. He likes food-trucks, and I've seen a lot of them when I go down on the street."

Something in the boy's words sounded familiar to Maxwell. A vague memory of his own youth flickered at the back of his mind. Maxwell persisted, "Do you ever dream about food-trucks?"

"Dream?"

"Do you ever see pictures in your head at night? Pictures of food-trucks."

"Oh! Sometimes, yes." The boy was happy with this. "I once saw a picture of myself, and I was a food-truck running down the streets taking food to everybody. I never broke down because . . . because . . . I just never broke down."

My God, Maxwell thought with excitement. Sitting down quickly beside the boy, he said, "What do you like as much as the food-trucks? Anything else?"

"I like the elevators. When they don't have to stop on a lot of floors, then they go fast. They go fast like food-trucks go fast. M'father says they do. Just *like* food-trucks go fast."

Maxwell's heart stopped. The word "like" pounded in his mind, and he remembered happily that "like" was one of the two key

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words of a simile, and that a simile was the most common sign of poetic thought. Maxwell thought to himself with growing contentment: "Grass is like a blanket . . . an elevator is like a food-truck." It wasn't the poetry Maxwell was used to, but it was poetry. Poetry, he realized, is not at all dead here.

Maxwell wanted to hug the boy, but Benji had picked up the cockroach again by its legs and was staring at it closely as it dangled from his fingers.

"And dead cockroaches," Maxwell said anxiously, "are they like broken-down food-trucks?"

The answer was slow in coming, but the boy said "yes" and smiled.

With the aftertaste of dinner biscuits in his mouth, Maxwell lay still on his blanket, hoping that Benji-tom was still awake. The darkness and threat of sleep was much less fearful these days, and the compulsion for seeing green things had been supplanted by a desire to know the poetry of Benji's world. Maxwell remembered his long cold sleep, and that naked memory told him again: There is little time, just a brief moment; the night is coming.

Benji stirred beside him, and Maxwell wanted to begin another murmured night conversation with the boy. The daylight hours were always occupied with Benji-tom, but Maxwell didn't want to stop there. He wanted to speak to the boy now, but thoughts stilled his lips for a moment.

"How easy it is," Maxwell thought to himself, "to forget the real persons of a past time when you are busy in the present." He had often thought of his wife and son, wondering how they finally died, but those reflections were rarely heavy with sadness. How much does one pine for a far historical past, was the question.

Maxwell was busy in this world. There was no green poetry to know in this world—no flowers or grass. But what mattered was that poetry did exist, and Benji's mind held it. Maxwell was busy—and he knew it—trying to capture the poetry of this time; and as he thought about it, he remembered a prediction made by a great Romantic poet of the distant past.

"Benji-tom?"

Calm silence. Breeze-less air. Then: "Great-father?"

"Before you go to sleep, I want to tell you something. Sometime soon I want to read you some words written a long time ago. I'll have to find a library first. Do you—"

"A 'library'?"

Maxwell sighed. There must be libraries, he thought, filled with books or tapes or whatever would fill libraries in these times. Someone would know. Perhaps the hospital.

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The nearest library had been five sections away, packed with microfilm and tapes, and the search for the piece of writing Maxwell wanted had taken a year and a half. Seated now on his blanket, Maxwell began reading to the boy, with a hand-copied version of the poet Wordsworth's words rattling nervously in his hands. He knew that an explanation of the poet's prediction might take months, considering Benji's mind; and, even though time was so short, Maxwell knew that the explanation would be the main thing to be accomplished.

"Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labors of men and science should ever create any material revolution in our condition, and in the impressions we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present . . ."

Maxwell had left Benji crying in his room two sections away, and the tears had been the first Maxwell had ever seen on the boy. Escaping from their presence, the old man hurried from the apartment on his own, and faced the long street walk to the "chamber," He was exactly seventy years old now, and the brief moment for finding poetry was over. But things were fine.

When he arrived on the twentieth floor and passed through the blank door that opened onto the waiting room of the chamber, Maxwell saw a cushion on the floor and sat down beside another old man. In all, there were five old people in the room, draped in off-white cloth. They remained quiet, eyes on their hands or on the floor, allowing Maxwell to think proudly of the past ten years with his grandson.

He had taught Benji to write, had taught him archaic words like "tree" and "grass," and had discovered for himself that for Benji the dirty wall of a room could be as kind as the sweaty face of his mother, that an old woman's cough in the night could be as assuring as a box of dried fish. "As" was the other key word for similes, for the poetry of similes.

He had also explained Wordsworth's words to the boy. Actually it had taken almost eight years for that explanation—all that talking about everything Maxwell could think of. More than the brief discussion of word-meanings that had followed the first reading of the poet's prediction, what had been the real explanation of meaning was Maxwell's persistent teaching. The fruit: the growth of Benji's mind's eye.

He had also made a present of twenty pencils to Benji. The Introducer had granted Maxwell the instruments as a last request before the old man's visit to the perfumed chamber where he would

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"sleep," but not have to face the agony of waiting for sleep to end and warmth to begin again.

Maxwell had worried for a long time about paper for the boy's pencils, until he found that there were other things Benji could write on. More permanent things.

A man who looked a little like the Introducer opened the door to the chamber and motioned to Maxwell. The old man rose and entered the death-room, only to smile when the perfume—meant to disguise the odors of gas and human sweat—made Maxwell think of flowers, perfumed petals stretching along the green hills of a river region where frogs sang of green water-lillies and green and green and green . . .

Benji-tom's father returned to the market, leaving the boy happy to know that the Super at the market would be willing to hire him the next year. A job was very important. There were fifteen people to feed; and soon Benji would have a wife.

Benji sat down on his blanket in the room and took a pencil out from under it. Staring at the wall, pencil raised in his hand, the boy remembered what the Introducer had told him that morning. The boy had made the long walk to the hospital only for an answer to a question, but a question that had been voicing itself in his mind every day since his great-father's visit to the chamber. The Introducer had answered the question well.

"I don't understand," Benji had whispered, "why my great-father always said that he had only a little time left to live and do things. He lived ten years, and that's a long time."

"It's only a minute, really," the Introducer said, "for a man who slept two hundred and twenty-three years."

Benji raised his pencil to the wall, and began slowly to write large printed letters. When he finished one line, he cocked his head and smiled, then read aloud to himself: "Walking and walking on the streets down there is like half-sleeping on my blanket with the running of cockroaches across my legs."

The words would remain on the wall, the boy knew. His mother didn't care if there was writing on the walls. The walls were as dirty as rat-tails anyway.

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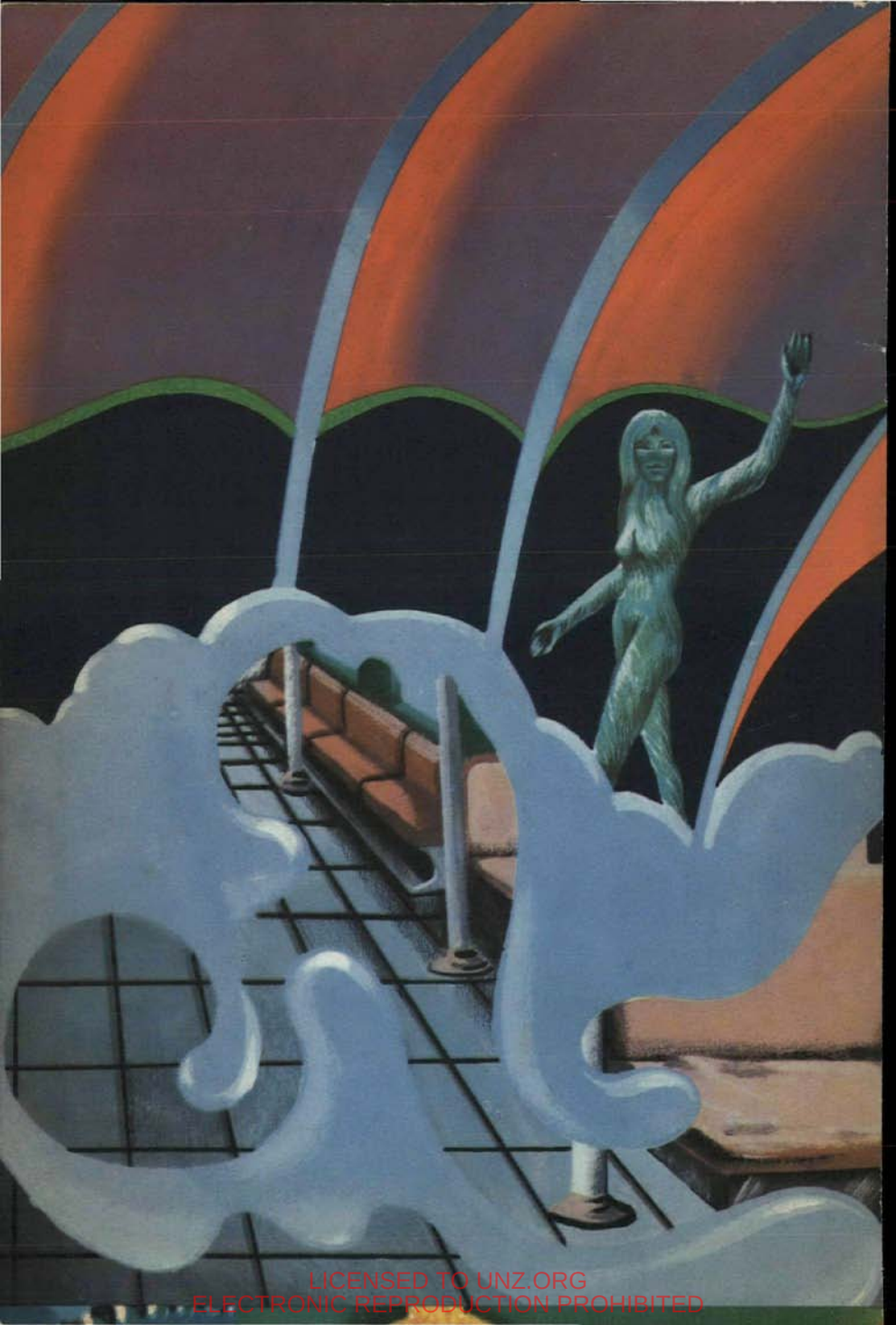

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